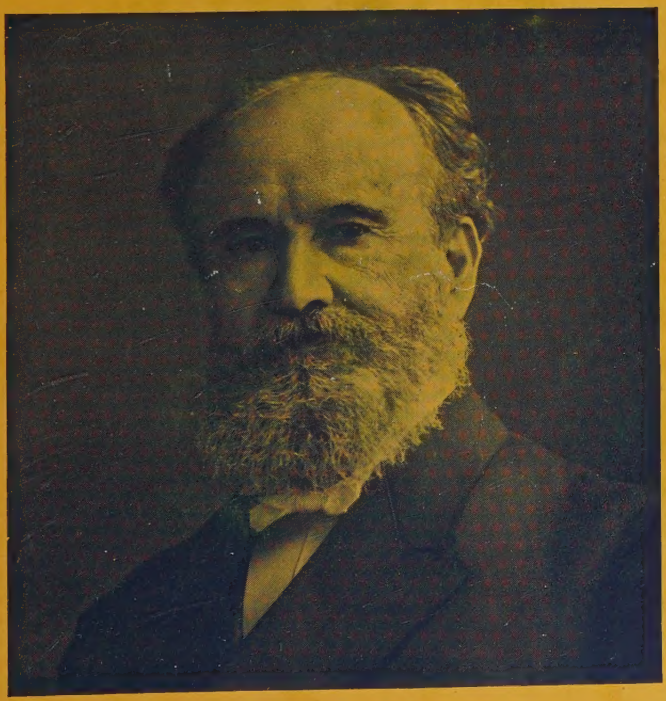
Anniversary Edition

"CHRIST IN THE BIBLE" SERIES

By A. B. SIMPSON

Founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance



THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

By

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Founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

Formerly Published as

Volume XIII

of the

"Christ in the Bible" Series

CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS, Inc.

Third and Reily Streets

Harrisburg, Pa.

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The Mark of Vibrant Faith

Est. 1886

(Printed in the United States of America)

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Chapter I.

THE BIRTH OF THE KING.

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews" (Matt. ii. 2).

MATTHEW is the Gospel of the Kingdom. The four gospels are not four different editions of the life of Christ, but four pictures of the Christ from different standpoints. Each presents a distinct aspect, and together they form a complete whole.

It is somewhat like attempting to obtain a photograph of Mount Blanc. They tell you in the valley that there is no single picture of the mountain, but they can you give a number of views from different standpoints, and then you can make your composite view of the mountain. So the four evangelists give us different views of the Lord Jesus, and out of the four comes the complete conception of His character and work.

SYMBOLS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

In the ancient tabernacle and temple stood the figure of the cherubim. There were four

faces, the first a lion, the second an ox, the third a man, and the fourth an eagle. The lion represented Christ as our King; the ox, the toiling and suffering Christ; the man, the human Christ, and the eagle, His divine character. The ancient Fathers justly applied these symbols to the four gospels. Matthew is the Gospel of the King, Mark the Gospel of the Servant, Luke the Gospel of the Son of Man, and John the Gospel of the Son of God.

The very first picture in Matthew is the King of the Jews, and the last is the Supreme Lord, to whom all power is given both in heaven and in earth, sending forth His ambassadors to the nations and claiming their obedience and loyalty.

When we turn to Mark, we find a story of deeds, not words; a toiling Christ who has got almost half through His ministry before the end of the first chapter.

In Luke we have the revelation of His human heart, and a series of most touching manifestations of His sympathy, tenderness and love. The first picture takes us to the cradle of the Babe, and the last gives us the walk to Emmaus, and the charming revelation of His human heart, unchanged even after the cross and resurrection.

When we turn to John, it is indeed the soaring eagle bearing us up to the sublime heights of His primeval Deity and the mysteries of His oneness with the Father.

And yet none of these gospels attempts to give us a complete biography of Jesus Christ. Even the longest presents but a few fragments from the story of His life, the sketch of an occasional day or hour gleaned from much more that has been left unrecorded, so much indeed that the Apostle John could say, that if all that He said and did were written, "even the whole world could not contain the books that should be written."

It has been well said that the New Testament evangelists were not reporters but editors. They did not give a chronicle of complete facts so much as a selection of special incidents, clustered together for the purpose of illustrating certain points and principles which were more important even than the facts themselves.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Returning to the gospel of Matthew, a brief analysis will show that it opens with the birth of the King, and after the briefest reference to His childhood, passes on to His forerunner and inauguration. Next comes the manifesto

of the King, containing the laws and principles of the new kingdom which He was to set up. This is found in the Sermon on the Mount, as it is generally called, which is an unfolding of the righteousness of the kingdom which He came to establish, the reenacting of the Old Testament law with its larger liberty and deeper spirituality. Next come the credentials of the kingdom, the works of power in which His ministry began and by which it was approved of God to the faith of His followers. This in turn was followed by the rejection of the King and His preparation for the next stage of the kingdom after He has been condemned, crucified, and called away from the earthly scene. This preparation consisted of the appointment of His apostles, the provision for the organization of His Church, the constitution and government of the new kingdom, the announcement of His second coming, and then the crown of thorns, the triumph over death, the revelation of the Prince of Life, and the messages which He gave as the mediatorial King to those that were to represent Him during His absence and until He should come again. All this will come before us in due order. At present our subject calls us back to the first chapter, the royal birth of Israel's King.

HIS PEDIGREE.

I. This, however, is preceded by the account of His pedigree. It was necessary that it should be demonstrated to Israel that He was her true King. The obvious design of this genealogical table is to show that Jesus was the actual and legal heir of David. Joseph, while not His actual father, was His legal father, and Jesus was the heir of Joseph. He was recognized by all the people as the son of Joseph, and entitled by every form of law and justice to inherit his rights and titles. If Joseph, therefore, was the lawful heir of David, Jesus must also be. This genealogical table was prepared with great accuracy, and establishes without question, the title of our Saviour to sit on the throne of David, and when He appears on earth again there will be no member of the Hebrew race that can lawfully dispute His title, that He is alive to-day, and the only living heir to David's throne.

TWO GENEALOGIES.

Many Bible students have been perplexed by the difference between the two genealogical tables given respectively by Matthew and Luke. Luke also gives us a long genealogy. The difference consists in this, that the gene-

alogy of Luke is Mary's, not Joseph's. Luke has given us the human side of Christ, therefore it was natural that he should trace His mother's pedigree, and she also could trace back her lineage to David by an unbroken line through Nathan, the son of David, rather than through Solomon, from whose line the family of Joseph came; so that we have two lines of genealogy connecting Jesus with Israel's history and David's throne.

Matthew's genealogical table contains three groups of names, each group consisting of fourteen. The first consists of patriarchs from Abraham to David, the second of kings from David to the captivity, the third, of persons of royal extraction, though not kings. Gradually the line descends until it reaches the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. These three groups form six series of seven each. Seven is the number of perfection, and six of imperfection. The six series that preceded Christ were all imperfect human links, the seventh is reached in Him, the perfect and golden link which makes the chain complete.

TYPES OF GRACE.

Some names have been omitted among the kings, noticeably the wicked descendants of the house of Jezebel. The most remarkable fea-

ture, however, is the presence in this genealogy of four women, all of them women on whom rested a shadow of shame. The first was Tamar, of the family of Jacob, the story of whose dishonor is well known. The next was Rahab, the notorious woman of Jericho, who was saved by the spies because of her friendship. The third was Ruth, the daughter of Moab, herself a virtuous woman, but her race accursed. The fourth was Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, but the partner of David's sin, when he stole her from her husband, Uriah. Why should these four dishonored women be named in the lineage of the Son of God and the Son of David? The reason is not far to seek. He came to be the Saviour of sinners, and He was not ashamed to include even in His royal line the most lost and sinful of the race, and thus to set the pattern which the whole story of redemption has fulfilled that "Christ receiveth sinful men."

HIS BIRTH.

II. The Royal Birth. Having proved His pedigree and established His title, the Evangelist next gives us the story of His birth. Seven witnesses stand forth to establish His lofty character and claims.

JOSEPH'S TESTIMONY.

1. Joseph, His reputed father. We are told that Joseph was a "righteous man," and when he found that Mary, his betrothed wife, was about to become a mother, with a rare blending of justice and gentleness, he had made up his mind to put her away, but so privately that no disgrace would fall upon her. Of course, he looked upon her as one of those unfortunates who appear all along the course of human history. The fact, however, that immediately after his determination we find him taking her to him as his wife and treating her with honor, affection and respect, is the strongest evidence that such a man must have had some convincing proof that she was innocent and virtuous. We are told what that proof was, namely, the vision of an angel from heaven bearing a divine message to Joseph, saying, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost, and she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

Joseph, therefore, is the first witness to the spotless and supernatural incarnation of the Son of Man.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANGEL.

2. The angel that appeared to Joseph is the second witness. His message has been already quoted, and so we have not only the testimony of Mary's husband, but of the supernatural messenger that brought his orders from the throne.

ISAIAH'S TESTIMONY.

3. A third witness was the prophet Isaiah. For all this had been precisely in accordance with the announcement which for centuries had been waiting unfulfilled in the sacred Scriptures of the Jews. Recorded there in the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah, in words which no Hebrew has ever dared to question to this day, is the strange announcement, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." Such a thought had never entered the human mind as a virgin bringing forth a son, but God had long ago announced it, and now it was at last fulfilled. How are we to explain this ancient prophecy and other repetitions of it in Micah and Jeremiah, if the miraculous conception of Christ is a delusion?

4. The very heavens themselves were wit-

THE GUIDING STAR.

nesses of the royal birth. A strange star appeared in the sky which brought from distant lands a company of the sages of other nations who knew from their reading of astrology that some distinguished ruler was being born in Palestine, and they must come to visit the place of His birth and pay their worship at His feet. Astronomers tell us of remarkable combinations of the planets which certainly happened at that very time.

Just as the material universe shuddered over the cross of Calvary, so likewise it sent its signals to bear witness at His cradle, too.

THE MAGI.

5. The witness of the world. The wise men that came from eastern lands represented the great heart of the world bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Humanity is crying out for God. In every age and every land there have been men whose attitude to the unseen world is well described by the apostle, who speaks of "feeling after God until they find Him." These sages had been watching the heavens for some light on the other world, and at last they felt the answer had come. Ancient legends love to represent three of these Magi as respectively a king, a priest and a prophet. The first rep-

resented the riches of the world, and brought his gold; the second represented his worship of the world, and brought his frankincense; the third represented the sorrow of the world, and brought an offering of myrrh, the perfume with which they anointed the dead, and the old legend adds that in response to his touch, the infant Christ looked up and touched the worshipper's hand. It is perhaps but a legend, but at least it suggests a truth, that the sweetest offering we can bring our King is the gift of our sorrow and our sin. These men were types of the myriads who all through the Christian age have pressed to the cross and found in the Incarnate One the answer to their sorrows and the remedy for their sins.

THE RULERS.

6. The best of all the witnesses to the Holy Babe were the scribes and rulers of Jerusalem, the very men that afterwards condemned and crucified Him. When the wise men came to Jerusalem they inquired for the king that was born, and Herod called a council of the ecclesiastical rulers and asked them where Christ should be born. They referred to the Hebrew Scriptures, and replied that it was Bethlehem, and quoted Micah's prophecy locating the little village. The wise men followed and found

the Holy Christ in the very place the prophecy had foretold. So the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the rulers of the Hebrew nation combine to identify Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, as the promised Messiah and Israel's King.

HEROD'S TESTIMONY.

7. Herod himself, the false king of Israel, became unconsciously a witness to the true King by the jealous fear which the advent of the Babe of Bethlehem brought to his troubled mind, and the cruel, murderous hate with which he pursued Him and sought His very life. When Herod heard of His birth, we are told, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with Him." What a compliment to the lowly Babe in yonder manger that He should shake the very throne of the reigning monarch! The cruel tyrant never rested till he had butchered all the children of Bethlehem in the hope of exterminating his dreaded rival. But God had hidden His Son from his hate and wrath. Yet, none the less, does Herod's jealousy bear witness to the kingship of Jesus Christ.

HIS NAMES.

III. The Name of Jesus. This story pre-

sents to us a number of remarkable names and titles of Christ full of instructive meaning.

EMMANUEL.

1. Emmanuel (Matt. i. 23). This means "God with us," and it stands for the first great truth of redemption, namely, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, God in human form, God united to our nature and revealed in our flesh. This is the highest honor possible for humanity, to sit on yonder throne as the very form of Deity.

JESUS.

2. Jesus (Matt. i. 21). "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." This marks the second great truth in redemption, not only Incarnation, but Atonement. Not only has He visited us, but redeemed us. It stands for the cross of Calvary, the blood of cleansing and the gospel of salvation. Have we accepted Him in this glorious Name and has He indeed saved us, not only from the guilt, but the power of sin?

CHRIST.

3. Christ (Matt. i. 16). "Jesus who is called Christ." This marks a still higher spiritual meaning. Christ means "anointed" and

it suggests the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Christ is the one that received the Holy Ghost and dispenses that precious gift to hungry and consecrated hearts. He is the One who not only saves, but sanctifies. Have we accepted Him as the Christ and have we received from Him that holy chrism, that sacred anointing which makes us Christians in the true sense, anointed ones, baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost?

THE KING.

4. King. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew ii. 2). What the world needs is a king. Human nature is made for obedience and subjection to a leader. Men want somebody to do their thinking for them, and that is the secret of the success of so many ambitious pretenders. We have our political bosses, and how subserviently they are followed; we have our industrial leaders and how disgracefully they have abused their power; and we have our religious bosses, and with what blindness and fanaticism their disciples are following some of these impostors and false apostles. But none of them have ever done or ever will do anybody any good but themselves. The world is waiting for the true

King, and Jesus is that King, the only One who will ever right our wrongs, and rule humanity with unselfish authority and righteousness.

THE HOLY CHILD.

5. The Child, the Babe. This name also He bears. "They saw the young child...and fell down and worshipped Him" (Matt. ii. 11). Thank God our King has the spirit of a child. Jesus is crowned and enthroned tenderness, meekness, humility, and self-sacrificing love. Although King of kings, and Lord of lords, He is as accessible, as simple, as lowly as a little child.

He comes to us in lowly disguise as the Babe of Bethlehem, the homeless wanderer, the Crucified of Calvary. But He is coming back in all His majesty and glory as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and only those who accept Him in His humiliation will be with Him in His kingdom. We must learn, like Joseph, to pass from the depths to the heights, we must go with Jesus from the manger to the throne.

It is said that one of the Russian emperors used to disguise himself and go out among his subjects at night as a poor tramp. One night, after having been turned from every door, at

last he found refuge in a peasant's cot, and lay all night upon a bed of straw, eating only of the crust the poor man shared with him. The next day he came back with his royal retinue round about him and called at that peasant's door. The poor man thought his doom had come, but what was his amazement to have his sovereign take him by the hand, thank him for his kindness to him the night before and load him with rewards and honors. Some day our King is coming back in majesty and glory, before which the sun and stars will cease to shine. Happy then for you and me if He who sits upon that throne shall meet your eye, shall stretch out His hand to welcome you, shall bid you rise, and seating you by His side, shall say, "I was a stranger and ye took Me in; come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Chapter II.

THE CHILDHOOD OF THE KING

"Thy holy child Jesus" (Acts iv. 27).

"THE child is the father of the man" is an adage which was as true of the childhood of Christ as it has often been of earth's distinguished men. In the story of Jesus recorded in Matthew ii, we see foreshadowed the larger story of His later life as unfolded in the Gospel of Matthew.

A careful study of this gospel will show that it may be divided into two sections, the first setting forth the manifestation of Christ as Israel's king up to the tenth chapter, and the second recording the gradual and final rejection of the Messiah by His people, until at last it culminated in the betrayal, trial and crucifixion. All this we see in type in the story of His childhood, as given in the second chapter of Matthew.

VISIT OF THE MAGI.

I. The Revelation of the King. This is presented in the story of the visitation of the Magi to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. These

men represented the wisdom and glory of the Gentile nations. It was true of the later history of Christianity that the Gentiles should be the first who recognized Him. These wise men stood for the merits of every tribe and tongue who have been flocking to His standard for nineteen centuries, even as He said they would. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." When the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, then Israel will seek and recognize her long rejected King.

These Magi brought the most distinguished recognition to the infant Messiah. They represented the priests and the prophets of the ancient world, and by their visit to Jerusalem and the answer given to them by the rulers of the Jewish nation, identifying Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, they added to their testimony for Christ, the testimony of the whole Jewish nation, too. The offerings they brought to Him were significant of the high character they ascribed to Him.

GIFTS OF GOLD.

1. They recognized Him as King and Lord by their offerings of gold. They counted Him the proprietor of all their wealth, and they brought to Him their gold in acknowledgment

of this. This is what our gifts to God really signify. We do not give because He is poor, but because He is rich. The common idea of Christian giving is that the cause of Christ is in distress and we must help it out. This is an insult to God. He does not need our help. With sublime scorn of men's assumptions He says: "If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. The world is mine, and the fulness thereof." He accepts our gifts as a token of our allegiance and as a recognition of His sovereignty. He does not want them unless they mean this. The question for each of us is that which Christ put to the men that brought Him a coin of Cæsar's, "Whose image is this?" He asked. And they said, "Cæsar's." And He said, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." If God owns our gold, let us give it to Him in recognition of His claim; if we own it ourselves, and are our own proprietors, let us keep it and perish with it.

FRANKINCENSE.

2. They recognized Him as divine by the worship they paid and by the frankincense

they offered Him. Frankincense was a precious perfume consecrated to religious worship. It was made by burning costly spices, and under the Jewish ceremonial it was protected by a prohibition so solemn that anyone who counterfeited it was guilty of sacrilege and sentenced to be cut off from among the people. In bringing this sacred offering to the Holy Babe the Magi acknowledged Him as a divine being. This was what He always claimed to be, and this was one of the reasons why His enemies at last condemned Him to death, because He said that He was the Son of God. What He asks from us is worship. He does not want our service any more than our gold unless we first give Him ourselves. The homage He claims is the devotion of our hearts, and there is no finer figure of true worship than the burning frankincense, all the strength and sweetness of our being on fire with love to God and poured out as an offering of devotion. In the highest sense, every consecrated spirit is a sanctuary with its altar of incense and its Holy of Holies, where evermore ascends the breath of adoration, love and praise, and all our nature is ever voicing the divine doxology "unto Him of whom and for whom are all things, be honor and glory forevermore."

MYRRH.

3. The last offering they brought Him was myrrh. This also had its significance. It was the anointing of the dead, and most distinctly it bore witness to His cross and precious blood. They recognized Him not only as their King and Lord, but also as their Saviour, whose life was to close with tragedy, and whose glory was to be humbled in the dust and buried in the tomb. The cross mark of Israel's Messiah was overlooked by them. There was so much of glory in the ancient picture of the Christ that they could not see the signs of suffering. We can see them clearly enough now that this is all past, but their eyes were blinded by the crown of thorns and the cross of Calvary. Alas there is a tendency today in the liberal theology of our time to pass by the cross once more, or at least, to explain it away in some lofty manner which will take out all its sacrificial significance. The latest theory is that the death of Christ was a sublime climax of heroism and self sacrifice, intended to exalt human nature to such a height that it could claim acceptance with God, and also intended to inspire by the force of example our selfish lives to the nobility of self-sacrifice. This is not the cross in which Paul gloried, and of

which the ransomed sing. Men are still ashamed of the myrrh.

One is reminded of the beautiful girl who had become ashamed of her mother's presence because that mother's face was scarred and her form disfigured in a most repulsive way. Patiently the mother suffered in silence until one day an old family friend took the daughter aside and asked her if she knew what caused that mother's disfigurement. And then she told the wondering and humbled girl how when she was a helpless babe, that mother snatched her from the flames, covered her with her own body, smothered the fire before it harmed her, but herself got the devouring blaze and was only saved from death with the marks of the fire upon her face and form for life. Do you suppose that daughter would have dared again to be ashamed of her mother's scars? Shame on the person that would blush because of our Saviour's precious blood.

"Ashamed of Jesus, yes we may,
When we've no guilt to wash away,
No fears to hush, no good to crave
No tears to wipe, no soul to save."

HIS REJECTION.

II. The Rejection of the King. Here also

we have the foreshadowing of His future rejection in His public ministry.

BY HEROD.

1. Herod and the Nation. Instead of welcoming Him, we are told that "Herod was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." This represents the attitude of the political world to the Lord Jesus and His second coming. We read of it in the second Psalm: "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed." Herod could only see in the birth of Christ a menace to his throne, and his natural resort was to violence and murder, and in his cruel and relentless determination to put Jesus out of the way, he assassinated all the children of Bethlehem under two years of age. Herod was of the race of Esau, and so he naturally represented the flesh in its enmity against the Lord; but he represented also the normal attitude of the world's political governments. We talk loudly of our Christian nations and our socialistic dreams, ideal communities and states that will be essentially theocratic. This shall never be until Jesus Christ Himself shall come and establish His kingdom by divine authority and power. And when He comes He will find the

world and its rulers not waiting to welcome and worship, but arrayed against Him in the last dread battle of Armageddon.

BY THE RULERS.

2. The Ecclesiastical Rulers. They, too, had the best of opportunities to examine His claims and accept His message. Their very Scripture pointed them to the place where He lay. But they, too, were troubled as much as Herod. They made no effort to visit Him at Bethlehem, but treated Him with neglect and indifference, and afterwards rejected and crucified Him. And so the religious world, as well as the political, will be found arrayed against Christ when He comes again. There will be a little flock of true followers and friends, but the Ecclesiastical rulers of Christendom are to-day not much in sympathy with the true spirit of Christ, and the Church is rapidly drifting toward the sad and solemn picture of the Laodicean Church, the last stage of nominal Christianity on earth, with Christ standing outside the door, and rejecting the lukewarm formalism which still wears His name, but which He is ready to spue out of His mouth.

EXILE IN EGYPT

3. His flight into Egypt marked the next

stage of His rejection. The Holy Babe and His mother, with Joseph, were forewarned of the threatened assassination, and immediately departed to the land which had always been associated with the sufferings of their people. Egypt was the land of exile and the house of bondage. It was necessary, therefore, that the Lord should pass through all that His people had suffered or should suffer. The journey was not made in royal state; no luxurious palace car conveyed this Leader and Master, no splendid hotel waited with open doors to entertain Him. Seated with His mother on a lowly ass, with Joseph leading it by the hand, along the rocky and desert road, with a leathern bag of water and a few dates or figs and barley cakes, they traversed the long and desert way, and took refuge at last in some humble cabin in the land of their fathers' bondage. Still He is a King in exile. He does not sit on splendid thrones, or control the men and armies of the world, but like David in the cave of Adullam, He has His humble followers gathered from the outcastes of the land. Christ is still an exiled King, and is despised and rejected of men, and if He were to appear once more, the majority of those who bear His name would probably be ashamed of Him.

THE NAZARENE.

4. Nazareth was the last stage in the story of His rejection. The very root of the name Nazareth literally means a sprout or root out of a dry ground. It is quoted in Isaiah xi. 1, "There shall come forth a rod [sprout] out of the stem of Jesse," and in Isaiah liii. 2, translated, "He shall grow as a root out of dry ground." It is the Hebrew word Nazar. The town of Nazareth was worthy of its derogatory name. It held the lowest place, socially and morally in public estimation, and the question of Nathaniel was characteristic, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It was enough to destroy a prophet's reputation to hail from the town of Nazareth, and the city of the Nazarenes was a term of reproach in apostolic times.

But the pressure of His life at Nazareth amounted to a good deal more than merely the reputation of the town. It was a life of poverty, toil and deep abasement. Read any literal description of the life of laboring people in Nazareth today and you will have a fair conception of the conditions of His childhood in the old, unchanging East. A carpenter's wages was an amount less than twenty-five cents a day. His home was a wretched

hut cut out in the side of the hill, more like a cave than a dwelling, without windows or ventilation, the family huddled together, sleeping on rude pallets of straw and living on the crudest food. Their implements of toil were most antiquated and clumsy, and the hours of labor and the rates of pay were not regulated by labor unions, but were as long and hard as the light of day. There seems every reason to believe that Jesus the eldest son of Mary's home was early left with the care of His mother, for Joseph must have died at an early period during the life of the boy. Speaking of the family, while He was still but a young man, His enemies said, "His brethren, are they not with us," but they made no mention of His father as if alive. If this be so, the little lad Jesus must have early taken upon Him the headship of the family at Nazareth and the burden of bread winner for the rest.

HIS BOYHOOD.

And so we can think of twenty years perhaps of His life, oppressed with the burden of care and toil, until He became familiar with every experience in our common lot of toil and sorrow. We read in olden legends of many a foolish romantic story connected with His

childhood, but the Gospel story gives no place for these idle, childish stories. It is a plain, unvarnished picture of a commonplace life, no relieving pictures except the light that shone from heaven in the secret chambers of His holy heart.

Such then is the picture of our Saviour's childhood. Modern history tells us of the founder of the great Russian empire having spent his boyhood in the humblest toil and the most obscure disguise. So God was preparing His King for the grander destiny of the ages to come, and so God is preparing now the kings and princes that are to sit with Him on His throne and share His glory by and by.

LESSONS.

What are some of the practical lessons of this New Testament picture?

1. It bids us recognize the Lordship of our King and bring Him the offerings of our wealth and sacrifice and acknowledge Him as our proprietor and Lord. He does not need our gold, but He will let us trust it to Him as a glorious investment, and some day He will make up to us the magnificent return that will fill our eternity with praise.

2. It bids us bring to Him our worship and offer up our hearts as the frankincense they

brought to Bethlehem of old. He does not want our gold without our love.

3. It bids us recognize and love His precious cross. The best gifts we can bring Him are our sorrows and our sins. He is asking us for the myrrh as well as for the frankincense.

4. It reminds us that there is One that has gone through every stage of our earthly experience and is with us in loving sympathy in our life of toil and sorrow. The Christ of Nazareth is our Christ still, and we can take Him with us to the drudgery of the nursery, to the grime of the factory, to the whirl of the workshop, to the burning heat of the harvest field, to the petty cares and annoyances of our business and family life. He has been just where we are now. We can take Him with us into the commonplace life of every day. This is where most people fail, and this was where our Master spent the largest part of His own life. Let us not wait for the opportunity of doing some extraordinary thing, but let us do the ordinary things for Him and in the spirit of His own lowly life at Nazareth of old. The story is told of an artist that waited long to find a piece of sandalwood on which to carve the angel whose image had been painted on his brain. At last, finding no other material, he took a common piece of oak firewood and

carved the image in the oak, and the work was so splendid that the image became a classic. And so many people are waiting for some great achievement. Let us take the materials of our everyday life, and God will help us to transform them into angels, too.

5. It teaches us that the true test of loyalty is humility. God's princes are recognized not by their uplifted heads and boasting claims, but by their ability to stoop. It is the kneeling soldier that is made by his sovereign a knighted noble, and the lower we stoop for Christ, the loftier the place He is preparing for us.

6. The picture of Christ's childhood has been stereotyped in the Acts of the Apostles and left with us forever as a lasting vision of God's Holy Son. Christ in one sense is a child forever. It is true that the child face is typical of the highest beauty. How often some sweet old man becomes like a little child in the mellow beauty of glorified old age. Our Lord has Himself said that whosoever shall receive a little child in His name, receiveth Him, and receiveth Him that sent Him. Does He mean that when we see our Saviour we shall see the face of a child, and that when we see our Father in heaven, it will be a blending of the simplicity, gentleness and the transcendent beauty of some lovely babe?

7. The Christ of Nazareth is a pattern for the children of to-day. Dear young friends, He is your Christ; He belongs to you. He knows the temptations, experiences and feelings of a boy. He was once your very age. Come to Him and test Him. Make Him your ideal; choose Him as your Master; and may He translate into your childhood the glory of the life at Nazareth of old.

Especially let parents remember that the Christ of Nazareth is the type for every other life. Too long we have had our children taught to look for their ideals in the proud successful leaders of human history, and to emulate the ambitions of an Alexander, a Napoleon, a Dewey. This is all wrong. The highest, truest pattern is not the splendor of earthly success, but the glory of self-denial, meekness and humility, self-restraint, and the moral heroism that can stoop to the humblest place and glorify the lowliest sphere. We hear of the strenuous life to-day, but there is a still higher and harder life, the life of meekness, the life of unselfish love. God give it to us and to our children!

Chapter III.

THE INAUGURATION OF THE KING.

"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17).

WHAT a contrast the introduction of God's King presents to the splendid pageants with which earthly sovereigns ascend their thrones! The present chapter gives us the picture of Christ's inauguration.

I. The Forerunner. The prophet Malachi, four hundred years before, had announced not only the coming of the Messiah, but also of His herald. He was come as Elijah the prophet, and as God's messenger. In exact accordance with the prophecy and the Old Testament pattern, John the Baptist at length appeared, introduced himself by angelic messengers and supernatural signs, and proclaimed the advent of the greater Personage that was soon to follow.

ELIJAH.

A good deal of confusion has arisen in the minds of superficial thinkers through the misleading theories of certain modern freaks, who

are contending for the office of the prophet Elijah and who very wrongly take it for granted that there is to be a third appearance of the ancient prophet. The Scripture gives no intimation of any such reincarnation of Elijah. In fact, they do not teach the doctrine of reincarnation at all. This is one of the wrong teachings of Eastern Buddhism. According to the Bible, John the Baptist was not an incarnation of Elijah, but a distinct individual, named John, who was to represent the same special prophetic ministry which Elijah fulfilled. This is expressed in the phrase, "He shall come in the spirit and power of Elijah." But John was not Elijah; he was a distinct prophet, closing the Old Testament series of prophetic ministries, even as Elijah had opened it, and our Lord Himself explicitly declares that John fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi respecting the reappearance of Elijah. "I say unto you, that Elijah is come already and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist."

FALSE PROPHETS.

John was indeed a good deal more true to the ideal Old Testament idea of Elijah than his modern imitators. His personal appear-

ance was rugged and his dress appropriate to a child of the wilderness. He lived in no sumptuous hotels, nor appeared in gorgeous ecclesiastical vestures, but his food was dried locusts and wild honey, and his gown a rough blanket of camel's hair, fastened with a girdle of skin about his loins. His spirit and message, like Elijah's, represented the law rather than the Gospel. He came to the Jewish people and was not a preacher of the Gospel for the Gentiles.

His most distinguished mark was his humility. His one desire was to bear witness to the coming One and pass out of sight himself. Unlike modern imitators, he had no desire to occupy the center of the stage, but like the true Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was his business and his supreme delight to disappear and leave "no man but Jesus only." He was the friend of the Bridegroom whose one occupation was to introduce the Bridegroom and then give place to Him. He was the morning star that shone to introduce the coming sunrise and then paled before the lord of day. "I must decrease, He must increase. This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

HIS MINISTRY OF PREPARATION.

I. The Preparation. John's business was

to prepare Israel for the presentation of their Messiah. The nation had backslidden until they practically lost their covenant rights as God's theocratic people. His ministry of repentance and the sign of baptism that accompanied it, practically ignored all their ecclesiastical claims and rights and demanded of them that they should come back to God as proselytes from heathenism had to come.

The rite of baptism was not unknown among the Jews, but it was invariably associated with the receiving of proselytes or converts from the heathen. To require a Jew, therefore, to be baptized was an ignoring of his Jewish standing. It implied that he had forfeited his covenant rights and had to be born over again. It was indeed laying the axe to the root of the tree and hewing down all their pretensions and claims of birth and merit. That they should submit to this is the profoundest proof of the marvelous power of the great revival introduced by John. Baptism in its own essential symbolism and significance is the figure of death and resurrection, and the baptism of the people of Israel was a death blow to all their religious pride and an acknowledgment of the need of an entirely new life before they could again stand on covenant ground.

An attempt has been made by some rigid

dispensational teachers to show that John's ministry of repentance was intended only for Jews. They tell us that the Gospel message to the Gentile is simply "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and that repentance is involved but not expressed, that it belongs to the message of the law and not the Gospel. These writers had better read again the statement of Paul (Acts xx. 21), where he tells us that His testimony was "Both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." We know the Church at Ephesus largely consisted of Gentiles, and Paul's message to them had been the message of repentance as well as faith. Again, in Acts xxvi. 20, the Apostle declares to Agrippa how his ministry and message began, "I showed," he says, "first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem and throughout all the coast of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Paul had the same Gospel for Jews and Gentiles, repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

The message of repentance is always God's preparation for every advance moment. The hardened sinner has no use for God's message of grace until driven to self despair by

conviction of sin; then he is willing to listen to the Gospel of the grace of God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John's message of repentance was not given merely to the coarse and criminal classes of his time, but to the learned Sadducees, the religious Pharisees and the cultured courtiers who thronged to hear him. It must have seemed very rude that he should class them all with publicans and sinners, but he did, and demanded of them a repentance so radical as to acknowledge that they needed a change as thorough as the publicans themselves.

It is said that John Wesley once preached one of his heart-searching sermons to a cultivated audience of fashionable people, and one of the ladies said at the close: "Why, Mr. Wesley, that sermon would just have suited the prisoners in Newgate jail." "Oh, no, madam," said the good evangelist, "if I had been preaching in Newgate jail, I would have preached: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The poor, self-convicted sinner could appreciate the Gospel, but the proud, self-righteous moralist is not ready for it yet.

But John not merely demanded repentance, but restitution, righteousness, and a life bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." The

need of to-day in the Church of Christ is a revival of conscience and righteousness. This would impress an unbelieving world a good deal more than our learned answers to higher criticism. It is said that a farmer once called upon an infidel neighbor and told him that he had just been awakened to a sense of his sin, and wanted to restore to him four sheep that ought to be in his neighbor's pasture, with the offspring of these sheep for the past four years. The infidel was very much disturbed and said, "Go away; don't bother me about the sheep, you are welcome to keep them. If you go on this way much longer I will believe there is something after all in your religion. Keep the sheep and don't disturb my peace of mind." This is the gospel our conscienceless age needs, and this is the sort of repentance and practical righteousness that will make people want the fulness of Christ and lead the world to believe in Christ and his people.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY.

III. The Witness to Christ. Notwithstanding his bold and faithful preaching of repentance, John knew that mere repentance would not permanently save them, and they must have a power supernatural and divine that would keep them from the sin that they

had confessed and for a time put away. Therefore, he brought to them the promise of another and a greater prophet, One who in His own personal character was so infinitely above him, that His very shoe strings he was unworthy to unloose, and One who was to bring a new power into our spiritual life as much greater than the mere power of repentance and reformation as fire is mightier than water. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Water is but external, fire is internal, penetrating and intrinsic in its cleansing power. This was what the prophet Ezekiel had announced centuries before as the radical need of fallen human nature, "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them." This is the deeper Christian life which God is making so clear and so urgent in the life of His people to-day. This is Christ's baptism, not John's, and no converted soul is saved until it has passed on to this deeper life and received the Holy Ghost in His sanctifying and keeping fulness.

JESUS BAPTIZED.

IV. The Baptism of Christ. Among the multitudes that came to John for baptism was one form so little different from the rest that

speaking of Him later, John says, "I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize said: "On whom thou shalt see the Holy Ghost descending like a dove and abiding on Him, this is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." John recognized the modest stranger as together they were going into the waters of the Jordan and at first refused to baptize Him. "I need," he said, "to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" But Christ insisted, explaining, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

ITS MEANING.

Christ had no sin of His own to bury, but He had the sin of the world, and His baptism, therefore, was the assuming of the responsibility of human guilt and going down in a figure to death on account of it, and then coming forth in baptism again in a figure of the resurrection. As He did so, John expressed the deep significance of this sign on the following day, by pointing Him out and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world." He had borne our sin into the waters of death figuratively, and, coming forth in resurrection, He had also figuratively borne it away. Then, a little later he was actually to go down into a real death on

the cross, and come forth in a real resurrection. His baptism was the rehearsal in advance of the crucifixion and the resurrection. Therefore, it was followed by the Father's voice accepting Him, and declaring that He was well pleased, not only with Him for Himself, but henceforth and forever more with all lost sinners who claimed Him as their Sacrifice and Righteousness.

THE HOLY GHOST.

At the same time, there came to Jesus Christ another baptism, namely, the Holy Ghost, just as John declared there would come this divine baptism to all that received Him. From this moment Jesus Christ stood in a new attitude to his work. Henceforth there was another Personality united with Him, in all his teachings, acts and sufferings. It was the third Person of the Deity, so that all Christ's public life was fulfilled in the power of the Spirit. While He was by His own divine right the Son of God, yet He deliberately suspended the exercise of His own divine rights, and took the position of a dependent man looking to God through the Holy Spirit to enable Him for all His ministry just as He enables us now.

Therefore, He delayed the commencement of

His public ministry until after He had received the Holy Spirit. He did not attempt a single official act until He had been baptized with power from on high. What a lesson, what an example for us! His Spirit-baptism was intended to be the pattern of ours. This one feature marked the infinite difference between Christ's baptism and John's. John's was a baptism into death to the old life of sin, Christ's was a baptism into life and power, bringing to our aid something more than our own will power and our purpose to do better, and giving to us the divine coöperation of the Holy Ghost.

Not only so, it takes us into a new sonship. Even as He was recognized as the Son of God, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, we share His relation to the Father, and in infinite humility, and yet with infinite confidence we can hear the Father say, "Accepted in the Beloved," "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

LESSONS.

In conclusion, what are some of the lessons of this story?

I. The first surely is Repentance. If there is anything that is not right, we must put it right. God is not going to do for you what

you can do. You can turn away from sin though you cannot keep away from it without His help; but the moment you make your new choice, He will give you His divine ability to keep it. "Turn ye at My reproof," He says, "and I will pour out My Spirit upon you." It is ours to turn, it is His to meet us with His almighty grace and pour out His Spirit upon us without which all our doing is utterly vain.

2. Are you living under John's baptism or Christ's? The great majority of Christians today have gotten little farther than John's baptism, a conscientious turning to God with a desire and purpose to live a better life, but without any real touch of power from on high. No convert should be left in this place. The only guarantee of being kept is to go on to the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

3. Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? That is the gift of Christ, that is the imperative need of every Christian. That is the special message of God to His people today, and the great work that He is doing preparatory to the coming of our Lord. Oh, listen to His appeal and "receive ye the Holy Ghost."

4. Are you living under the opened heavens and in the fellowship and faith of God? That is what the baptism of the Spirit brings. The

resurrection and ascension of Christ have opened heaven to the child of God, and it is our privilege to walk in the light of that upper world. We are dwelling in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We are the children of the day. Our feet may tread this earthly scene, but our hearts, our interests, our hopes, our life are all invested yonder, and it is our privilege also to walk in the favor and love of God. "He hath made us accepted in the Son of His love." We have no right to live like a prodigal in the kitchen or the swine house, but to take our place in our Father's love. Not for our righteousness are we accepted, not because of our unrighteousness are we excluded. But that day on Jordan's banks, one Man so pleased the Father, that forevermore He is pleased with every sinner that accepts Him and abides in Him, and He is willing to give us His grace, so that we may, moment by moment, "walk worthy of Him unto all pleasing." Oh, let us walk with the heavens opened unto us and the Father ever whispering: "My beloved son in whom I am well pleased!"

Chapter IV.

FIRST CONFLICT AND VICTORY OF THE KING

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1).

BEFORE David, the type of His greater Son, could be publicly called to the kingdom of Israel, he had to prove his prowess in single combat with the champion of the enemy, and his victory over Goliath vindicated his right to be recognized as the true leader of his people. In like manner the Lord Jesus Christ immediately after the public inauguration of his ministry by the testimony of His Father, was called to meet the great enemy of God and overcome him in single combat and decisive victory.

MEANING OF THE TEMPTATION.

The Temptation in the Wilderness had a threefold significance. First, it was intended to prove the divine character and the spotless righteousness of the Lord Himself.

In the next place, it was intended to defeat

the devil from the very start and put him in the position henceforth of a conquered foe.

And in the third place, He fought the battle of the Wilderness as the Captain of our salvation, and His conflict was the pattern and pledge of the conflict and victory through which all His followers should pass.

THE PLACE.

The scene of the Temptation was suggestive. The first chapter of human history began in a paradise, but it ended in a disaster. The first chapter of divine redemption began in a desert, but it shall end in a paradise restored. This contrast is typical of the old and new dispensations. The old dispensation gives promise of earthly blessing, the new dispensation starts in company with our Lord in poverty and humiliation and it leads up through great tribulation to the place where sorrow is unknown.

THE TIME.

The time of our Lord's Temptation was also full of significance. It came immediately after His baptism and the voice of the Father proclaiming from the open heavens: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Our severest temptations will come to us after our

greatest blessings. The old line is full of meaning,

"If conqueror, of tomorrow's fight beware."

Indeed, it is only the soul that has met God and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost that really feels the full force of temptation. The man that is going along with the current of evil is insensible to its power. It is when he resists that he is conscious of the opposing force. It was when the Philistines heard that David had been made king that they came to "seek for David." He was important enough now to be an object of their attack, and it is when we have yielded ourselves to God and committed ourselves to the purpose of full salvation that all powers of evil are combined to break us down and dishonor us with defeat and failure.

Then again the time of our Saviour's Temptation was significant in respect to His physical condition. He had just been fasting forty days and nights, and it is added that after this He was "an hungered." His body and mind were worn and exhausted with long fasting and privation in the Wilderness and in this condition He was particularly susceptible to the assault of the enemy. Satan knows when we are

weak and subject to his power, and he wisely chooses the time of attacking.

The story is told of a young student of blameless character who had struggled for years to win a valuable fellowship in the University that he might be able to support his widowed mother and continue his own studies. At length the crisis hour came on which all his future depended, and his friends were delighted when they learned at the close of a strenuous day that he had successfully passed the examinations and won his fellowship. Up to that time he had denied himself every needless indulgence and firmly resisted all temptation that might turn him aside from his high purpose. But what was the surprise and sorrow of one of his student companions on calling at his room that night to congratulate him, to find him lying on the floor in a condition of helpless drunkenness. The strain had been too great, the reaction had come, nature had given way, and the enemy had chosen that moment to wreck his life. And so we need to watch at all times, but especially to "Withstand in the evil day and having done all, stand."

THE ADVERSARY.

The agent in the Temptation is called the

devil. This name is passing out of some of the modern theological dictionaries, but you will always find that with the passing out of the devil, there will also come the passing out of the blood, the cross, the Saviour, and even God Himself. The Bible recognizes a personal devil as definitely as a personal God. It is the very intensity of the light that flings on the street the shadow as you pass beneath the electric lamp. There is a real devil and a mighty army of demon spirits under his direction and control. It is probable that he himself, their mighty leader, only occasionally confronts any of God's servants. We may be very sure that he employs his time and his resources to the best advantage and wastes no needless ammunition on those that can be safely left to weaker hands.

There is no doubt that the story of the Temptation describes a personal conflict between him and the Lord. At the same time, we do not need to believe that he was there in visible form, and that the instance described actually took place on a real mountain or the pinnacle of the very temple itself. We know that He was tempted like as we are, and our temptations do not come to us in tangible manifestations of Satanic power. It is in our spirit that he meets us, with mental suggestions

so vivid that they almost seem like voices, and yet, there is no visible presence. Had our Lord's Temptation been a realistic incarnation and revelation of the devil, it would have been separated very far from the experience of His people. It is a question if Satan would be much of a temptation to us if he came in the traditional form, with cloven feet and dragon wings. The old Scotchman was not far from wrong when, after looking at a great painting of the Temptation, with the devil in the background in the usual characters and colors, he said: "Yon deevil wouldna tempt me." He meant that he was too repulsive and terrific to attract him very far in his direction. It is when he comes as an "angel of light" with his insidious suggestions to the mind that we have most reason to dread him. There is no difficulty in supposing that the mountain and the pinnacle of the temple were made real to Christ in vision, just as Ezekiel was present in the spirit in the temple at Jerusalem, although actually hundreds of miles away in Babylon.

A CHEAP DEVIL.

One of the strongest impressions which one receives in carefully reading this narrative is the utter poverty of the devil. He had noth-

ing to offer Christ but stones. He couldn't even bring Him bread. True, he offered Him the kingdom of the world and the glory of them, but these were all stolen goods, and the devil had no power to give title. Christ rejected his braggart bribe, and a little later was able to say Himself: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and the day is coming when the shout will be heard in earth and heaven: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ."

The devil is a liar and a fraud, and he will cheat you every time. Do not listen to his propositions. He is a promoter of worthless stocks, he will take your money and laugh at you after he has fooled you.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

There was another agent in this Temptation, namely, the Holy Spirit. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Do not let us make our own temptations, but when God permits them, let us be very sure that He will go with us through them as He did with Jesus Christ. Then we shall have no need to fight in this battle. Hand over the devil along with all our other trials to His hands, but the battle will be

the Lord's and we shall learn to stand still and see Him conquer. "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." "When the enemy cometh in like a flood, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

AGAINST HIS FAITH.

The form of the Temptation is full of practical teaching and help. The first object of the enemy was to destroy His faith. This is always the primary object of the tempter. It is a trial of our faith. He came to Christ with an insinuating question just as he came to our first parents in Eden. He did not dare to deny His divine Sonship, but he cunningly hinted at the obvious inconsistency of anybody in so deplorable a condition as He was, claiming to be the Son of God. It was as if he had said, "You, the Son of God, out here in this desolate wilderness, neglected by your Father, ready to perish with hunger? Surely it must be some wild delusion; and yet, if it be, why certainly you will have no difficulty in proving it by supplying yourself miraculously with all the bread you need?" And so he comes to us with some discouragement. He points to some mysterious trial or privation and he insinuates the subtle doubt of our Father's love, or of our

own sonship, and we begin to wonder if, after all, we can be truly His children. Discouragement is back of many a life of sin and failure, and confidence in God is a "shield of faith wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Then, when the adversary gets us discouraged, it is so easy for him to suggest to us some forbidden way of help, "Make the stones bread," take some unauthorized way of deliverance, step out of the will of God, and accept the compromise of right or honor which the wicked one has always ready at our hand. But the Master would do no such thing. It was not so necessary for Him to have bread, as to do the will of God, and stand where His Father had placed Him in submission and obedience. And so He answered, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

A VICTORY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It has been finely said that the Lord Jesus did not defeat Satan by power, but by righteousness. It would have been very easy for Him, by a stroke of power to have hurled the fiend into the abyss, but He did something better, He stood so panoplied by divine righteousness that the enemy could make no impression

on the Son of God and was driven back helpless and defeated simply by the Master's breastplate of righteousness.

HIS HIGH NATURE.

The next Temptation appealed to His higher spiritual nature. It was a solicitation to His faith to go too far, venturing beyond the prescribed limits of God's own Word. "Cast Thyself down," he said, "and let God work a mighty miracle in your preservation, which will lead the people to acknowledge you in your divine character." When the enemy cannot tempt us through our lower nature he will do so through our higher. He will use even our religious life and our very faith as the instrument of fanaticism, and push us to some rash, presumptuous extreme through which we shall take ourselves out of the hands of God, and really put ourselves in the hands of the enemy. Therefore, we see around us today, the numerous examples of well meaning people that probably began with sincere faith and then allowed themselves to be controlled by the spirit of fanaticism until they have become the very instruments of the devil himself. Let us remember that even faith itself can go no farther than the Word of God. It must always be limited by "it is written," and then

"all things are possible unto him that believeth."

POWER.

The next assault of Satan was aimed at the ambition of our Lord, and especially at what might be called a holy ambition. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and doubtless urged upon Him the good that He could do by accepting these seats of power and vast resources and using them to reclaim this earth from all its wrongs and grievances, and prove Himself the deliverer of humanity. But He asked this: that he be permitted to hold the helm, receive the homage and be the master mind behind it all. "All this will I give thee, if Thou wilt worship me."

But he overreached himself. "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," was the answering blow with which his blasphemous demand was met, and he himself driven, defeated, from the field. So still he comes with the alluring vision of power and ambition, pleading, no doubt, as of old, some beautiful motive, some dream of world-wide influence, some scheme of social reform or political Utopia. The one fatal condition in it all is, "if thou wilt worship me." His

touch, his control, his partnership is enough. There can be no compromise with evil. Even the best things that he can give would be defiled by his fatal touch, and the true Christian will always remember that the only safe course is to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and no partnership with evil in any form.

THE WORD OF GOD.

The weapon which the Master used in this great conflict was the Word of God. "It is written" was His constant answer to the devil's approaches. It is very remarkable that the book of the Bible from which Christ quoted all His answers to Satan was that book which the higher criticism of to-day has rejected, the book of Deuteronomy. With divine foresight, the Lord chose this very portion of the Scriptures for His endorsement, and defeated Satan by the weapon which he himself pronounced the weakest in all the armory of truth. Satan seems to have been so much imprssed with Christ's effective use of the Bible that he himself tried it once and began quoting Scripture, too, but he left out seven words in the quotation from the 91st Psalm, and those seven the most vital of all, "He shall keep thee in all thy ways." All that Satan was thinking of

was the physical keeping, but the clause he left out promised something besides this, namely, the keeping of the trusting soul in all his ways, so that it would be kept morally and spiritually as well as physically, and it was because of this very promise that Christ was kept from falling into his snare. You may always distinguish between the right and wrong use of Scripture by this test. The devil uses the Bible, too, but he uses it dishonestly to establish some special theory and without regard to the other Scriptures which appear upon the same point. We must remember always, not only that "it is written," but that "it is written again."

THE RESULTS.

Finally, let us note the results of this conflict. "Jesus went forth in the power of the Spirit." The Spirit led Him in and the Spirit led Him out with mightier power than he had entered in. The conflict of the wilderness left Him stronger than at the beginning. He was not only conqueror, but He was "more than conqueror." So the Lord would have us gain spiritual power through the conflict. Let us not be content with merely escaping the devil's snare, let us use the conflict for his defeat and dishonor and for the spoils of victory

that will leave us richer and our adversary weaker than when the battle began.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Not only is there the discipline of trial here and the strength it brings, but by and by there is a reward for the man that conquers.

There are four crowns promised to the victors. The first is the martyr's crown, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." The second is the minister's crown, "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall ye receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." The third is promised "to them that love His appearing." But there is a fourth crown for the faithful soul that has battled with some hereditary temper, some long-established habit of evil, some trying surroundings and conditions in life, and perhaps feels that little service has been accomplished for God, and that it will be much to be saved at all "as by fire." But some day, God will bring forth the crown of life for such tempted ones, and amid the acclamations of the skies, will place it upon your head, tried and struggling child of God, while the heavens shall ring with the echo of the promise, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

Chapter V.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying" (Matt. v. 1, 2).

AFTER Moses had led the people across the Red Sea and begun their national history, he went up into a mountain and there promulgated God's great law from Sinai. In like manner, Jesus Christ, the Prophet greater than Moses, when He had been formally inaugurated and announced as the Messiah, also went up into a mountain and gave forth the great law of the New Testament.

ITS PLACE AND TIME.

This is popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is not introduced in the Gospel of Matthew in its chronological place, but was really delivered at a later period than the things recorded in the immediate context. This is in accordance with a principle already

explained, that the writers of the Gospels were not mere reporters or historical chroniclers, but spiritual teachers, marshalling their facts, not in historical order, but rather in their logical relation to the central idea of their Gospel.

It was the true order, that, having introduced the King and witnessed to His character and divine commission, he should now give to us a public declaration of the great principles of His Kingdom and its relation to the teachings of the past and the plan of the future.

SCOPE OF THE DISCOURSE.

This great discourse, which covers the next three chapters of Matthew, v. to viii., is an unfolding of the righteousness of the Kingdom in contrast, first, with the teachings of Moses and the Old Testament; second, with the practice and conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious professors and teachers of the day; and thirdly, with the ungodly world who are travelling the broad road which leadeth to destruction.

It is necessary at the outset to clearly fix in our minds the purpose of this great discourse.

First, it is a summary of the law, presenting in concise form the essence of the teachings of Moses purged from the errors and corruptions

which had grown round them through Jewish traditions.

Secondly, it was a summary of the ethical teaching of the New Testament, and therein marked a great advance upon the moral teaching of the Old Testament. It is a sort of frontispiece in the opening of the volume of Christ's life and teaching, like the first Psalm in the Book of Psalms, which is a portrait of the godly man and primarily of the Lord Jesus Himself, the supreme type of all godliness and goodness. The Sermon on the Mount finds its only perfect realization in Christ Himself and so it stands like a portrait at the opening page of the Gospels.

NOT THE GOSPEL.

But, in the third place, it must not be forgotten that even this sublime discourse falls short of the full spiritual teaching of the New Testament. It is not, therefore, in an unqualified sense, the law of Christ, and it is not correct to say, "If I regulate my life according to the Sermon on the Mount, I shall have reached the highest standard of character." We must bear in mind not only its advance on the teaching of the Old Testament, but its defects and shortcomings as compared with the deeper and higher teaching of the later portions of the

New Testament. For example, we find nothing in this sermon about the name of Jesus and His mediation with the Father as our Intercessor and Great High Priest. The Lord's Prayer is offered to the Father direct without any reference to the Son. It is true that the "Our Father" of the first petition may be held, in the light of what Christ afterwards taught, to include the Intercessor along with us when we pray, but this certainly could not be obvious to an immediate listener to whom the great truth of Christ's Priesthood had not yet been explained. A good deal later, the Lord Himself refers to this and supplies the lack. "Hitherto," He says, "ye have asked nothing in My name, ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Further, there is nothing here about the great work of the Holy Ghost, the next great revelation of the New Testament. This was to come later, and it would have been premature to introduce this teaching here before they were prepared to receive it. Later, the Lord Himself, made it preeminent in His parting messages, and the apostles of the New Testament re-echo the message on every page.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the Sermon on the Mount says nothing of the atonement, the crucifixion of the natural man, the

resurrection life into which we enter through fellowship with Christ, and the indwelling of Christ Himself in the heart as the great Pattern of godliness, and the only secret by which we can really live the Sermon on the Mount. It is a cold yet faultless vision of righteousness, revealing, like a mirror, our unrighteousness, but as helpless as that mirror would be to wash away impurities which it had exposed upon your face. While we give this glorious message its high preëminence, let us not put it in a false place, and let us not forget the Master's own later explanation, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you unto all truth." It is no reflection upon the honor of Christ to say these things, or frankly acknowledge the things that are lacking in His great law from the Mount. It was the message of the King and the son of David, and it marked a transition between the Old and the New Testament dispensations, being the law of the Kingdom rather than the law of the Gospel. We find in this New Testament law ten great points.

CHARACTER.

1. Character. The Master does not speak

of what we do, but what we are, and the personal character which He here describes is strikingly different from the Old Testament ideal. The eight beatitudes mark the gradation of religious character by four steps downward and four steps upward. True spiritual character does not begin with self effort, but self renunciation. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is the first step; the people that are dissatisfied with themselves and have a deep and overwhelming sense of their failure and helplessness. The next step is also down, "blessed are they that mourn." These are the people that not only realize their nothingness, but are deeply moved about it, and are tender and susceptible to the touch of God's Spirit. "Blessed are the meek" marks the next descending step; the people that are yielded, broken, and so far from self will that God can mould them to His will. Finally, the fourth step is a deep spiritual hunger, a longing for righteousness; a desire so earnest that all else is gladly sacrificed for the higher blessing sought. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6).

Now begins the spiritual ascent. The first step is love to others, that tender charity born of our own poverty of spirit and own deep sense of nothingness and failure. "Blessed are

the pure in heart." From love to man it is but a step to love to God, and so the next step is: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. v. 8). This is literally, the single in heart, the people that have but one aim, to please and glorify God. The third step in this advancing scale brings us to positive and practical service for Christ and others, "Blessed are the peace makers" (Matt. v. 9). This does not mean the mere settling of personal grievances between people, but the sacred ministry of making peace between man and God, the reconciling of the world to Him, the seeking and saving of the lost. The last stage in spiritual life is suffering for Christ's sake. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and speak evil of you for My sake" (Matt. v. 10, 11). Christianity has its coronation in victorious suffering and patient submission to the will of God.

INFLUENCE.

II. Influence. Character is not a cold and ethical quality; but it has a beneficent influence. Two fine figures are here employed to express it, the salt and the light. The salt is the figure of our silent influence, that which does not express itself in action, but spreads as

a sweetening and conserving influence through human society. A very large part of our influence is unconscious and intangible, forces that are held in solution and yet that hold together the family, the Church and the whole social economy. True godliness is such salt, and for the sake of the saints of God, the world is saved from utter destruction.

There is also a positive influence in Christian character; it is like the light, diffused, far reaching, beneficent. It is not enough to have negative qualities. We are to "let our light so shine that men shall see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven." They must see our good works, but they must glorify not us, but our Father.

Salt and light, beautiful figures of the influence of holy character. God help us to be as wholesome as the salt, and as bright, as pure, as far reaching in our influence for God and our usefulness to men as the beautiful light.

RIGHTEOUSNESS.

III. Righteousness. From the 17th to the 37th verse, the Lord dwells upon the righteousness of the Kingdom, showing, first, that it must not aim at a lower standard than the law, because instead of abrogating that law He has come to fulfil it. In the next place, it

must surpass the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and we know that their righteousness was most scrupulous and elaborate. Above everything else, the righteousness of the Kingdom must spring from the heart and control the secret motives of the soul. The hatred of a brother is recognized as murder, the spirit of evil desire as a real transgression of the seventh commandment, and the very thoughts of the heart as constituting moral acts and qualities. Under the heart-searching light of this holy law, human nature stands convicted and condemned, and "all its righteousness as filthy rags."

LOVE.

IV. Love. The last ten verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew reach a height which the Old Testament had not dreamed of. It taught a love that not only sought to bless its neighbor but its enemy, and to be like the kind and beneficent heavenly Father, who "makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and unjust." The law of Moses had nothing to correspond with the sublime ethics of the forty-fourth verse: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

This is the high plane of the fifth beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7). It is more than righteousness, it is divine love.

SINCERITY.

V. Sincerity. Chapter vi. 1-18. Their good deeds, their alms, their prayers, their fasting, must all be in the sight of God and not in the sight of man. Ostentation and love of human praise must be denied and our most sacred ministries inspired by one supreme motive, the glory of God and the approval of our Father in heaven. Human praise, if sought as a reward, will destroy all claim to higher recompense. The things we do to be seen of men may bring us their approval, but their value terminates there. "Verily, I say unto you they have their reward."

It is said a good man was once asked by a heavenly messenger what boon he would specially crave, and he asked that henceforth he might be made a blessing to everybody he came in contact with, but in such a way that his own shadow would never fall upon any one else, and only God would recognize the service. The seraphim veil not only their faces, but their feet with their wings, and the highest ministry is that which is so lost in the thought

of the Master that it forgets even its own foot prints.

A SINGLE AIM.

VI. Singleness of Heart. Chapter vi. 19-24. There must only be one Master. We cannot serve God and Mammon. There must only be one goal, the home above. All our treasures must be there. The eye must be single to God alone, or the whole body shall be full of darkness. This is the meaning of the sixth beatitude. "Blessed are the pure in heart," literally this means, "the single in heart," people that have but one object and aim, to bless and glorify God, whether men praise or blame.

TRUST.

VII. Trust. Chapter vi. 25-34. The spirit of the Old Testament is work; the spirit of the New Testament is trust. Anxious care is forbidden and counted for a sin. After the solemn words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. vi. 24), the conjunction is introduced, "therefore." "Therefore I say unto you take no thought for your life," and the inference is very plain that the taking of thought and the harboring of anxious care is a form of serving Mammon. Worldliness consists not

merely in the love of the world, but quite as much in the fear of the world. True faith trusts the heavenly Father for the present life as well as for the life to come, and if we are not trusting Him now for the things that are present and real, what evidence have we that we are really trusting Him for the things that are unseen and about which we may only be deceiving ourselves? God gives us the tests and trials of the present life in order to prove that He is indeed real to us, and that our faith does take Him for help in time of need. Righteousness is not merely doing our duty to our fellow men, or even having an eye single to the will of God, but the very root and principle of it is a confidence so simple and complete that like the sparrows of the field, we can leave all our interests in His hand and trust Him for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come.

CHARITY.

VIII. Charity. The spirit of consideration for others, especially in our judgments concerning our fellow men, is next enforced (Chap. vii. 1-16). The same principle by which we judge our brethren is to be applied to us by the Supreme Judge in the last day. With burning irony, the Master exposes the

hollowness and insincerity of pretending to take a little mote out of our brother's eye when there is something in our eyes as much greater than our brother's fault as a great piece of timber is greater than a little mote floating in the sunbeam. The word "beam" here literally means "a rafter," a heavy piece of timber, and the keen logic of the comparison needs no emphasizing. We are not forbidden to judge of the moral quality of the actions of people; it is their motives that we are not to judge. Actual evil is obvious, and it is not wrong to call it by its right name. But this is a very different thing from sitting in judgment upon the motives and character of others. This is the prerogative of the divine Lawgiver, and He will not suffer us to invade it.

At the same time there is a fine sentence added in the sixth verse. "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample you under feet and turn again and rend you." The spirit of charity does not require us to be weak and easily imposed upon. We should be so discriminating that we will not allow people to abuse our trustfulness. We should not commit ourselves to those that would take advantage of our frankness and rend us. We are to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

PRAYER.

IX. Prayer. Two paragraphs are devoted to the subject of prayer in this discourse. The first is chapter vi. 9-13, where the Lord's Prayer is given as the great model of prayer. This subject is resumed in chapter vii. 7-11, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." The efficacy of prayer is most emphatically announced. Further, the various degrees and forms of prayer are finely expressed by the three words, "ask, seek and knock." Prayer is not only a matter of petition, but it is also a matter of patient and persevering search, and it is also a force which breaks down the barriers which interpose, and co-operates with God in bringing its own answer. Very beautifully does He tell us of the faithfulness of the great Hearer of prayer. He will not deceive us or put us off with a counterfeit blessing and from our own love to our offspring, He rises to the sublime argument, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

THE TEST.

X. The Final Test of Character. Having finished the chief points of His discourse, He finally concludes by telling of the solemn test which is to come to every life and character.

1. He gives us a simple test to apply to our own actions. This is the Golden Rule (Matt. vii. 12), which shines like a star of light over all the teachings of human philosophy and morals. "All things, whatsoever, that ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them": this is the law of life by which we can determine for ourselves the right or the wrong of any action about which we may be in doubt. Is it according to the law of love? Will it bring happiness and blessing to my brother? Would I want him to do it to me? This will clear away every mist and enable us to act with a good conscience and a full assurance of pleasing God.

2. Next He gives us the test of the fruit men bear. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (verse 16). The false prophet may come in sheep's clothing, but if we search him we shall find him out by the influence of his life and the fruit of his teaching and practice. Is it humility, holiness, glory to God and lasting good to men? Or is it self-aggrandizement, self-glory and gain?

3. Obedience. This is to be the test of the judgment. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 21-23).

4. God tests us now. The rain and the storm described in the closing paragraphs of this great Sermon on the Mount is not all to be revealed amid the tests of the Judgment Day. Many of these tests mercifully come to us now. God anticipates the day of judgment and gives to us the opportunity of finding out now whether we are prepared to stand the tests of the final day. Some day we shall thank Him for the trials and temptations that brought us to see whether we were wrong and saved us before the final crisis from the doom of the self-deceived.

The figure of the rock refers undoubtedly to the great Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ Himself, He alone is the foundation of holy character and final acceptance. It is not enough to know these lofty teachings or even to approve them.

There is no power in poor human nature to fulfil them. The law of Christ, like the law of Moses, is but a mirror to reveal us to ourselves, but not a fountain to cleanse us. For this we must go to Christ Himself.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not final but preparatory. It leads us up to Christ, but we must follow until we get there and then from His indwelling light and His enabling Spirit get the power to make this picture a living reality in our own experience. The great Teacher did not stop with the Sermon on the Mount. He has led us all the way to Calvary and Pentecost, and, now, resting upon His finished work and His indwelling life and power, we can sing in a sense which the saints of the Old Testament could never know:

> "On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
> All other ground is sinking sand."

Chapter VI.

THE MIRACLES OF THE KINGDOM

"He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark vii. 37).

AFTER the giving of the law by Moses, Israel's lawgiver, comes the record of the mighty works of Joshua, their great captain of faith and victory. And so, after the Sermon on the Mount, and the new law of righteousness proclaimed by the Lord Jesus, we are introduced to the victorious work of the Captain of our Salvation.

MATTHEW VIII. AND IX.

The two chapters which follow the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. viii. and ix., contain a striking group of the miracles of our Lord, specially clustered together so as to set forth His mighty power in the most emphatic and convincing manner. They are not presented in their strict chronological order, but with special reference rather to their bearing upon His revelation as the Messiah and King. They are worthy of careful study in connection both with the Kingdom and the King.

THE KINGDOM.

First, the Kingdom. Thoughtful students and teachers of dispensational truth see in these successive miracles a striking foreshadowing of the Kingdom in its future developments. While we have no authority to say that the narrative was intended to set forth these future facts, yet there is nothing to forbid such an interpretation so long as it does not exclude the literal and immediate application of the truth to the present, or Gospel age. One of the dangers of dispensational teaching is that it is apt to pigeonhole important portions of the Scriptures and limit them to the future when they are needed for the spiritual comfort of God's children in the present.

THE LEPER.

In this view of their dispensational applications, the healing of the leper in the eighth chapter of Matthew is applied to Israel. The Lord was in the house when the leper came to Him, and so Israel in her sinfulness and helplessness, of which leprosy was the special Levitical type, is represented as coming to her King for healing.

CENTURION'S SERVANT.

The next miracle, the healing of the cen-

turion's servant, was quite different. Christ was absent from his house, and His healing virtue was transmitted through the intervening spaces to this Gentile believer, whom the Lord commended for a faith such as He had not found even in Israel. This represents Christ's healing and sanctifying power among the Gentiles through the Christian age, not through His visible and manifested presence, but through His Word, which is emphasized especially in this miracle.

PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which follows, brings the Lord again into the house, and once more He is dealing with Israel, who is represented by the sick one here, whom He raises up to minister unto Him. This stands for the restoration of Israel at the coming of the Lord and the glorious ministry to which she shall be called during the Millennial age.

THE MULTITUDE

Then follows the healing of the people in Matthew viii. 17, and the casting out of demon power without limitation. This, we are told by our dispensational friends, foreshadows the universal extension of the healing power of Christ after His second coming, when it shall

be without limitation or restriction. Now some are healed, but then the promise will be fulfilled, "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick."

THE TEMPEST STILLED

The story of the stilling of the tempest in the eighth chapter of Matthew represents, according to this view, the trials and troubles of God's people during the present time, which are to be brought to an end at the appearing of the Lord, when He will rebuke the angry waves of this troubled world, and there shall be a "great calm."

This will be followed by the destruction of Satan's power in the Millennial earth, represented by the miracle of the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, whom the Saviour met on the other side of the lake after the stilling of the tempest.

THE PARALYTIC.

Then follows the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, accompanied especially by the statement, "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Our friends represent this as the appearing of Christ on earth and His restoring of His people Israel, raising them up from their paralysis of ages, and sending them forth to walk and work for Him.

OTHER MIRACLES.

After this comes the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, standing for the future resurrection.

And finally, the two miracles of the healing of the blind and the dumb complete the group, and tell of the time when the veil of blindness shall be taken away from Israel, and the promise shall be fulfilled, "then shall the tongue of the dumb sing."

THE KING.

Second, The King. But whatever may be the dispensational meaning of these miracles, there is no doubt about their present meaning. They present an impressive exhibition of the power of Christ over sickness, Satan, nature, death and sin.

I. Power over Disease. This is illustrated in a series of striking cases of healing.

HIS WILL.

1. The Will of Christ respecting the healing of disease, as revealed in the healing of the leper. This poor sufferer came to Him representing a suffering world. His appeal expresses the attitude in which most people stand toward the Lord. They do not doubt His power, but will He? "Lord, if Thou *wilt* Thou canst make me clean." The answer of

Christ was prompt and unequivocal and leaves no doubt upon the mind of any candid sufferer about His attitude toward disease: "I *will*, be thou clean." "Not only am I willing, but I am positively wanting to heal and help all who come within reach of My touch. But there must be a corresponding will on your part." Therefore, He adds, "be thou clean." You must bring a sanctified will, which is the true seat of faith, and meet His will, and when your will coöperates with His, then will come the manifestation of the healing power.

HIS WORD.

2. The Word of Christ for Healing. "Speak the word only," said the centurion, "and my servant shall be healed." This miracle is especially valuable for our dispensation. This represents the power of an absent Christ, through His word, to reach our need. We do not need to

"Climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down,"

His Word still holds in solution all His ancient power. Like that living seed they took from the mummy's hands, and which had been lying there for three thousand years, but which contained in its bosom a vital germ, that the moment it touched the soil it germinated into life,

and today our land is filled with Egyptian wheat; so the Word of Christ comes down to us across two thousand years with unextinguished vitality in its every sentence, and if we will claim the promise, if we will plant our seed in the soil of a trusting heart, if we will commit ourselves to the promise and put our weight upon it, we shall find that it is as real as in the days of Galilee, and God's words will become living deeds in our life.

FOR HIS WORK.

3. The Work of God. The next healing, Simon Peter's wife's mother, represents the purpose of Divine Healing. It is not for your selfish gratification or gain, but, like her, you must rise and minister to Him and give back to God in loving service, the blessing that He has vouchsafed to you.

HIS BLOOD.

4. The Atoning Blood. The next reference connects our healing with the cross. The reason that He healed was because it was incumbent upon Him as the Messiah to fulfil the picture given by Isaiah the prophet, "Himself took our sicknesses and bare our infirmities." This He did when He hung on the cross and bore in His own body all the physical liabilities of our bodies, making it true "by His stripes

ye were healed." It is the deep foundation of divine healing, the solid rock of Christ's atonement.

SIN AND SICKNESS.

5. Sin and Sickness. The next example in the first part of the ninth chapter shows the connection between sickness and sin. They had brought this man to Christ with much faith on their part. But the Lord did not heal him at once. He saw a deeper need and at once he touched the real root of the trouble. "Son," He said, "thy sins be forgiven." Back of his sickness was the deep source of sin, and not until he was pardoned and prepared to take his place as an accepted child of God, was the Master ready to pass on to the healing. It is not true, therefore, that the Lord healed this man because of the faith of the four men that led him. Through their faith, the Lord took the case in hand and saved him first; and then, after he was saved, he had faith enough to take the Lord for healing and for anything, himself. It was through his own faith that he rose up and took his bed and walked. After we meet the Lord in salvation, it is easy to trust Him for everything besides.

THE TOUCH OF FAITH.

6. The Touch of Faith. This is beautifully

exemplified in Matthew ix. 20, 21, in the woman who pressed through the jostling crowd, and, with something in her own heart that had been awakened to apprehend God and feel its way to the living Christ, reached Him, and drew from Him the very dynamite of His power, for the word "virtue" here literally is dynamite. The spiritual life has a set of senses corresponding to the outward senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Just as the root of a tender grapevine feels after the hidden spring until it finds it, and then drinks from it its fertilizing nourishment, so there is something in a hungry heart that feels after God until it finds Him. And when it finds Him, it recognizes His reality just as sensibly as we know the light we see, the water we taste, the fragrance we breathe, the hand we touch.

We cannot take the Lord's healing till we have this sense of spiritual touch. God will give it to us. The beginning of it is the sense of need, and as we press this up to God and follow hard after Him, we shall surely find Him and a new life and revelation will come to our inmost being.

THE TOUCH OF CHRIST.

7. The Touch of Christ (Matt. ix. 29).

"He touched their eyes." There are two touches. There is the touch of our trusting hand; there is the mighty touch of His healing hand. Both are necessary, but His will follow ours in every case. He did not touch them until they had answered his challenge to believe, and when He touched them, His message was: "According to your faith be it unto you."

Such is the picture of the power of Christ to heal. That power is still unchanged. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

SATAN.

II. Power over Satan. Along with the healing of disease mentioned in Matthew viii. 16, was also the casting out of evil spirits with His word. Indeed, in the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, there is a suggestion of demon power behind the disease. He "rebuked the fever," as Luke expresses it, and this implies that there was some evil power behind the fever with moral responsibility. In the same way, He rebuked the tempest, implying that it was controlled by the power of Satan.

The severest conflict, however, with the demon powers of the pit is recorded in the eighth chapter, verses 28-34. This occurred in the

country of the Gergesenes, immediately after the stilling of the tempest and the crossing of the sea of Galilee. Immediately on landing, there met Him two demon-possessed men, so violent that no man might pass that way. They were possessed by a legion of evil spirits. There seemed to be a double personality in them. One power excited them to dread and try to escape Him and the other drew them to Him for mercy and help. This was usually the case with such victims. At times the human personality prevailed and cried out for deliverance; at other times it was the voice of the demon that controlled. In this case, a strange request was permitted and granted by the Lord, that they should not be driven from the country and forced back into the dark abyss, but allowed to enter into the herd of swine. This the Lord permitted. The result was the immediate destruction of the animals, who, frenzied with terror, fled headlong into the sea and perished. What a fearful exhibition not only of the violence and power of Satan, but also of the power of the human soul in that it could endure the presence of a demon host sufficient to drive to madness three thousand swine.

The effect of this miracle to the citizens of this country was a terrible dread that the pres-

ence of the Lord would be fatal to their forbidden trade in these unclean animals. The Lord granted their request, too, and departed out of their coasts.

The last case of the casting out of demons was the dumb man (Matt. ix. 29), whose infirmity was evidently caused by the evil spirit, for when the demon was cast out, "the dumb spake and the multitudes marvelled, saying, 'It was never so seen in Israel.'"

NATURE.

III. Power over Nature. The story of the stilling of the tempest tells a larger story of Christ's providential control over all the forces of nature and all the events of time. He who stilled the waves of Galilee sits supreme above all the surges of human history, and is able to calm the storm and quiet the troubled heart. The ship in which He sails is always safe, and, although He may seem to be asleep in the hinder part, and we may not always be conscious of His presence, yet He is ever there, and in the hour of need will manifest Himself in power and deliverance.

DEATH.

IV. Power over Death. The raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead tells of one

who is the Conqueror of death. His own resurrection has confirmed His title as the Prince of Life. But the time of resurrection is not yet. "Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." Soon the sad days that intervene will have passed away, and the glad morning of the resurrection will have come. This is the blessed hope that takes the sting from death and robs the grave of its victory.

POWER OVER SIN.

V. Power over Sin. This was His mightiest victory. He tells them, in connection with the healing of the paralytic, that it is easier to say to the sick and the palsied, "rise, take up thy bed and walk," than it is to say, "thy sins be forgiven thee." But "the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins," and He has power in heaven, too. This is the age-long victory of His love. And this will be the everlasting song of heaven. "He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN.

The chapters we have just been following give several fine illustrations of His power over sin. We have one in the calling of Mat-

thew, the Publican. Here was a man that was engaged in the most degrading and disreputable occupation. He was a collector of taxes for the Roman government, and this was something which every royal Jew recognized as a badge of shame and a sign, usually, of the lowest moral tendencies. The men engaged in this nefarious business were themselves largely the beneficiaries, and all that is now understood by the word graft was familiar to them. They demanded extortionate and oppressive taxes from the people in the name of a cruel government, and they reimbursed themselves abundantly for the trouble and humiliation. Matthew was doubtless like the rest of the tax gatherers, of whom Zaccheus is held forth as a fair sample. The Lord Jesus met this man one day and uttered to him one single command—"Follow Me." There is something sublime in the promptness with which the call was obeyed. Instantly he left his desk, his receipts and all his ambitious prospects and simply, wholly followed Christ. This is the power that still can turn us from the world and lead us to follow Jesus.

A little later we find the Master sitting down with publicans and sinners at the house of Matthew and giving His excuse for it: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to

repentance." That is still the supreme business of His life.

Shall we, as we read the story, repeat it yet once more in our own lives, or trust Him to repeat in the lives of those we love? The same Christ is still "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Chapter VII.

THE REJECTION OF THE KING

"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him: He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isa. liii. 3).

"He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John i. 11).

"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not" (Matt. xi. 20).

WE have seen in the course of the last chapter the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of David and the King of Israel, in His power over sickness, Satan, nature, death and sin, and the time had now come when his people must either accept Him or reject Him. The Light was so ample and the credentials were so divine and convincing, that evasion was impossible, and the issue faced them inexorably and immediately. Would they receive Him or reject Him? The answer is given by our text, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," and the old vision of Isaiah was fulfilled, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of

sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him: He was despised and we esteemed Him not."

Already in the previous chapters we have had no doubtful intimation of this result. In connection with the remarkable faith of the Centurion in the eighth chapter, He had said: "I have not seen so great faith, no not in Israel, and I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom of heaven and the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Again in the ninth chapter of Matthew we have already seen the spirit of hostility and opposition manifested when He undertook to forgive the sins of the paralytic, and they asked in indignation, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But in the next three chapters (Matthew x-xii) their opposition reaches its climax, and finally terminates in open blasphemy and murderous conspiracy, so that the Lord Jesus is obliged to change entirely His methods from this time, and instead of teaching openly, we find Him using the veil of parables and commencing in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew that extraordinary series of the Parables of the Kingdom in which He unveils the future development of

His kingdom in a form fitted to hide the truth from those that were disposed to abuse it, and at the same time to reveal it to the earnest and sincere inquirer. Let us trace this story of rejection in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth chapters of Matthew.

THE APOSTLES SENT OUT.

1. The Sending Out of the Twelve. The first intimation of it is in connection with the sending out of the twelve Apostles (Matt. x. 1-42). They were to be His witnesses to Israel, and the terms of their commission are most explicit. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6).

The very fact of His appointing them indicates his realization of the fact that He Himself would soon be taken from the world, and therefore He appoints these representatives to carry on His kingdom after He shall have gone. Their message is to be rejected as well as His. "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," He says. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake; ye shall be hated of all men for My

name's sake; the disciple is not above His Master, nor the servant above His Lord." "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household" (Matt. x. 16, 18, 22, 25).

REJECTED.

The principles of Christianity are not to bring about a state of universal peace, but "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own house." I am not come to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). The radical teachings of the Gospel arouse as much antagonism as love. On the other hand He tells them that those that received them will be recognized as receiving Him and the slightest ministry done to the disciple and the servant shall be acknowledged and rewarded by the Lord.

How different the prospect thus held out to them to the ideal which they had formed. How strange and sorrowful the ministry to which they went forth. But how necessary it is for us to understand the true spirit of the New Testament and realize today that the spirit of the age is as utterly opposed to Christ and true Christianity as it was in Galilee and

Judea when these words were first uttered. We are not going forth to be received with open arms by our generation and to see a golden Millennium arise around us during the present order of things, but rather "a little flock" of humble and separated men and women following still "without the camp" the lowly Nazarene, while the spirit of the age pursues its earthly aims and is satisfied with its own resources, hopes and destinies.

JOHN'S MESSAGE OF DOUBT.

2. The Message of John the Baptist (Chap. xi. 1-19). The next incident was the sending of two disciples from John the Baptist with a message of inquiry: "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" (verse 3). The Baptist was now a prisoner at the mercy of Herod, who was soon to behead him, and in the loneliness of his dungeon, the breaking down probably of his health, and the confused reports that doubtless came to him about Jesus Christ, he seems to have begun to doubt whether He was the true Messiah after all, and he sent two of his disciples to inquire.

It must have been discouraging to the Master to find that even John was beginning to doubt, but He sent back the self-evident an-

swer, "Go and tell John the things ye see and hear; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them," with the addition of a little hint to John himself, not to lose faith, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (verse 4, 5, 6). He then takes the opportunity of bearing high testimony to John as the greatest prophet of the old dispensation, but adds, as showing how much greater the Gospel age is than the Old Testament: "Nevertheless he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The humblest disciple of Jesus raised through Him to the family of heaven as a Son of God is greater than the highest of the Old Testament prophets. How lofty the dignity to which Jesus has brought us!

The Lord next proceeds to tell His disciples how the Jewish nation has rejected both John's ministry and His. "Whereunto," He adds, shall I liken this generation? They are like children sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows saying: "We have piped to you and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented.'" He means that the ministry of John with its solemn message of repentance has not really

brought them to repentance, and that His ministry, so different, with its words of joy and hope, has likewise failed to evoke any real response from the heart of the nation. Israel refused the message of her God, and rejected John and Jesus too.

THE CITIES OF GALILEE.

3. His Rejection by the Galilean Cities. Next follows His open upbraiding of the cities of Galilee, wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they had received His messages and the manifestations of His love and power in vain. Less terrible, He tells them, shall be the fate of Tyre and Sidon and even Sodom in the day of judgment than theirs. In proportion to their opportunity and privilege has been their indifference and unbelief. To-day the ruins of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum attest the awful fulfillment of these tremendous warnings.

Let not the modern hearer of the Gospel forget that the privileges and opportunities which we are enjoying in this enlightened age will bring upon us also an equal or a greater guilt and doom if we receive the grace of God in vain.

HIS GRACIOUS WORDS.

4. His Mercy in Contrast with Their Unbe

lief. Over against the dark picture of their rejection stands the light of His love. It was in the very hour when His lips had uttered the dread woe against the cities of Galilee, that His tender and loving heart burst forth with the most touching and beautiful of all His messages of love, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. xi. 28-30).

Perhaps in the crowd that surrounded Him, He saw the agonized face of some poor sinner, and from the hard unbelief of the self-righteous Pharisee, He turned to the earnest hearts even in that crowd that were longing for His mercy. It is a beautiful coincidence brought out by a careful study of the gospel harmony, that the story recorded in the seventh chapter of Luke of the sinful woman who came and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, in the house of Simon followed this incident in Matthew. How delightful to think that that appeal recorded in Matt. xi. 28 had gone to her heart and led her to follow Him to the house of Simon and there to let Him know how His words of mercy had comforted and saved her. Yes,

as the lone rose of the Alps grows amid the glaciers, so the fruits and flowers of grace are found even in the most forbidding soil and the most unlikely surroundings. Oh, that some heart that reads these lines might also come and repeat the story of her blessing.

NEW CONTROVERSIES.

5. Controversies about the Sabbath. The next step of their opposition and rejection was a bitter theological fight with Him over their traditions concerning Sabbath observance. As He walked with His disciples through the cornfields they were hungry and without supplies, and they took the corn and rubbed the ears in their hands and satisfied their hunger in this crude way. The very poverty suggested by the act might well have touched the hearts of His cruel foes. It was indeed a sign of His rejection by a selfish world, and showed how true it was, as He said elsewhere, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." But all they could see in it was a slight to their rigid traditions about working on the Sabbath. In their eyes it was a greater sin to rub out a few ears of corn than to let a man die of starvation.

The same spirit appears in the incident that follows in the twelfth chapter of Matthew in

connection with the healing of the man with the withered hand. They recognized His healing power by their question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" (Matt. xii. 10). It never seems to have occurred to them that if He had power to heal He must be greater than the Sabbath or the law. But all they could see was their theological bigotry. The Lord answered them by an appeal to common sense and humanity. He asked them what they would do if one of their sheep had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath. Would they help it out, or let it die there. The question needed no answer for every one of them knew that his self-interest quite as much as his humanity would lead him to save the sheep, Sabbath or no Sabbath; and the Lord swiftly turns the argument on them by answering, "How much better is a man than a sheep, therefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days," Matthew xii: 12, and immediately heals the man with the withered hand. These ancient theologians were types of a good many later followers, men who would fight to the death for a quibble or a doctrine, but who had no compunction about torturing to death an innocent martyr under the Spanish Inquisition, or treating a poor Hottentot as if he were a brute.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

In passing, it is not out of place to refer to the question of the Sabbath. Our Lord undoubtedly recognized the Sabbath by His own distinct acknowledgment "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath day" (Matt. xii. 8). He distinctly revised it when He incorporated it into the New Testament and He established not only a new significance to it as His day, and the day that we hold in remembrance of His resurrection, but He also instituted as the essential principle of its observance the great law of liberty and love that runs through all the teachings of the Gospel. The essential principle of Sabbath observance is love. It is not so much what you do not do, as what you do. It is to be spent in works of mercy and charity and therefore is to be kept in the spirit of holy liberty and loving service for God and man. Do not let us go back with the Seventh Day Adventists to the law of Moses. The Gospel has set us free, but the liberty on which its freedom rests is "Use not your liberty for a cloak of sin, but by love serve one another."

PLOTTING TO KILL HIM.

6. Conspiracy to Destroy Him (Matt. xii-14). The outcome of this controversy is a bitter, malignant hatred that at length fully

determines upon His destruction and at once begins to conspire for His death. They seem to have met at this time in a special conference and arranged the plot for His immediate arrest and destruction.

They seem never to have realized how futile all their plans and plots were against One that had the power of life and death in His hands, and that He could not die until His hour had come. But God let their malignity reach its full fruition and show itself in all its blackness and crime.

WITHDRAWS.

7. Christ's Withdrawal. We now read that when He knew of their conspiracy, He withdrew Himself from them and kept in retirement for a while (Matt. xii. 15, 16). This was but a type of His final withdrawal from Israel altogether. He was beginning to leave the nation to its fate, and, therefore, the evangelist quotes from Isaiah the prophecy concerning Him. "Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment unto the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smok-

ing flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matt. xii. 18-21).

The emphatic feature of this quotation is its reference to the Gentiles. Christ was now withdrawing from Israel and preparing for His ministry to the uncovenanted nations who have reaped the advantage of Israel's blindness and rejection. How solemn for us the thought that there comes a time in the individual's life when the Lord also withdraws Himself from the soul that has long rejected His grace.

"There is a time, we know not when,
A point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men,
For glory or despair."

THEIR BLASPHEMY.

8. Their Final Blasphemy, and Unpardonable Sin (Matt. xii. 24-32).

This final climax of their long course of unbelief and opposition finally came through an outburst of popular enthusiasm on the part of the people after one of His miracles. Having healed the blind and the dumb man, possessed of an evil spirit, so that the man both spake and saw, the people were amazed and said,

"Is not this the Son of David?" The Pharisees could not stand this testimony and they broke out into wild and angry vituperation and immediately accused Him of being in league with Satan and casting out demons by Beelzebub, Prince of the devils. Once before they had hinted at this, and the Lord had passed it over, but now He takes up their charge and answers it, first, with the most inexorable logic, showing them the absurdity of supposing that Satan would try to cast out himself, when this would be the surest way of breaking down his kingdom, and then, having exposed them to the ridicule of the people, He turns upon them with awful severity and pronounces upon them the fearful sentence of eternal judgment because they had committed the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost by attributing the works of God to an evil spirit. Their sin had reached its culmination and at last their doom was sealed.

It is indeed a fearful picture and the question may well be asked, is it possible for us to commit their sin today? Certainly it is not possible in precisely the same way to commit it without our going to the extent of impious infidelity. But it may be possible for any sinful man to go to the terrible limit which they did in its essential principle, that is, in the

face of light with full conviction and certainty that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to reject Him deliberately and finally. This would indeed be an unpardonable sin. Let no one, however, be distressed and driven to despair by the enemy through this passage. If you still find that you really desire and are willing to accept the Lord Jesus as a Saviour, for in this very passage He tells us that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," the assumption of course is that they will accept forgiveness through Jesus Christ. It is the rejection of Christ that constitutes the fatal sin. For such there is no forgiveness, for there is no other Saviour but He.

THE SIGN OF JONAH.

9. The Sign of the Prophet Jonah. "They asked Him for a sign and He now gave them the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt. xii. 38-42). It is somewhat sardonic that the Lord Jesus should choose as His witness the very man that the higher critics are trying to get rid of. Jesus at least had no doubt about the historical reality of Jonah and the whale, and we can safely stay in such good company, notwithstanding even the higher critics.

The two peculiarities of Jonah's significance as the type of Christ were, first, his death and

resurrection. By referring to this the Lord Jesus clearly indicates now what He had incidentally hinted at before, that He is to be finally rejected and crucified. The next significant point, however, in Jonah's resemblance to Christ, was that after his resurrection Jonah was sent to the Gentiles and not to Israel. There is no mistaking the meaning of this in Christ's use of the figure. He is clearly intimating that through His death and resurrection He is to become the Saviour not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile and the heathen.

In connection with the story of Jonah, the Lord adds a solemn warning to the men of that generation by telling them that their sin was greater than that of Nineveh, which repented at the preaching of Jonah, while "a greater than Jonah" was appealing to them in vain.

PARABLE OF THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.

10. The Unclean Spirit. The parable of the unclean spirit follows (Matt. xii. 43-45). He applies it directly to Israel. They had been previously cleansed through John the Baptist, but they had failed to go on as John had bidden them, and receive Jesus Christ, and the result would be that their hearts, left "empty, swept and garnished," would again

be possessed by "the unclean spirit" and "their last state be worse than the first."

How real, alas, all this has become to Israel, and it will become more sadly true in the judgments still awaiting them. It is also true of the individual soul. A temporary reformation, which is not followed by the filling of the heart with Christ and the Holy Spirit, will not suffice, but will be surely followed by a worse relapse. The only sure salvation is a full salvation. It is not enough to cast out Satan, you must receive the Holy Ghost and be filled with the fulness of the indwelling Christ.

HIS MOTHER AND BRETHREN.

11. The Rejection of His Own Family (Matt. xii. 46-50). The last incident in the chapter is very pathetic. As we read it in the light of the other Gospels, we learn that His mother and His brethren were seeking for Him, not out of idle curiosity or family affection, but because they believed He was insane. "They said He is beside Himself," and probably they wished to put Him under restraint. Yes, even His dearest ones at last had failed Him, and He takes advantage of the occasion to proclaim the law of the new relationship which He has established in the

family circle of heaven. "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren, and He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father, who is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

And so to us, as we follow the Master, may come the keenest of all trials, the misunderstanding that separates from us our dearest friends and makes us as strangers and aliens to all human love. If it comes, let us go with Him all the way, but let us not be embittered against our friends. Let us love them still with His love and let us cease to need their love; loving with the love that seeks their good rather than ours, and God may be pleased at last to lead them even unto Him. But let us pass on in spirit to the heavenly family circle and the new circle of those whom He calls "brother and sister and mother."

In conclusion, surely the one lesson that stands out above all other lessons is that the sin of sins is the rejection of Jesus Christ. Our eternal destiny hangs, not on our obedience or disobedience to any or all of the commandments, but our attitude toward Jesus Christ. As some one has said, "It is not the sin question, but the Son QUESTION."

Dear friend how do you stand toward that question? "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Chapter VIII.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matt. xiii. 10-13).

"I ALWAYS did like the likes of Jesus" was the simple testimony of a child to the parables of Christ. He is the matchless Teacher and Illustrator. In this chapter we have the beginning of His wonderful parables and the group in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew is known as the parables of the Kingdom. The formula with which each begins is "The Kingdom of heaven is like."

The purpose of Christ's parables was to present spiritual and moral truths under the veil of some incident, not in itself historically true, and yet not contrary to truth. His

matchless stories were really works of imagination, but in beautiful harmony with truth, and setting forth the deepest and loftiest moral and spiritual teaching.

WHY IN PARABLES.

His reason for teaching them in parables is given by Himself as connected with their rejection of His previous messages. As we have already seen, all His words and works had been met by them with increasing hostility and malignant misrepresentation. They listened to Him only that they might in some way entangle Him in His talk. And so now He finally withdrew from the multitudes and began to teach His disciples in the veiled form of the parable in order, as He states Himself in this chapter, that the truth might be revealed to the diligent and earnest students and concealed from the indifferent and the prejudiced.

The present series of parables, as might be expected from the symbolical number seven, contains a complete unfolding of the future plan of His Kingdom during the entire age up to His second coming. His own nation had now rejected the Gospel of the Kingdom and it was to be taken from them for a time and given to the Gentiles, and in these par-

ables He gives us the panorama of the age throughout the Christian dispensation.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The phrase, "The Kingdom of heaven," or "The Kingdom of the heavens," really contains the keynote of the series. It does not mean the Kingdom in relation to Israel, nor does it mean the history of the Church, but rather the progress of Christianity up to the coming of the Lord. It describes a mingled condition of good and evil, growing externally and marked by extraordinary prosperity and apparent success and yet full of corruption as well as righteousness, concealing the leaven as well as the treasure and the pearl, and only to be finally separated at the end of the age and the coming of the Lord.

This series of parables describes, first, the planting of the truth and then the sowing of the evil. This double work of good and evil is brought out in the first two parables. Then in the third parable of the Mustard Seed we see the rapid growth of this mingled system of good and evil until it fills the earth. But in the following parable of the oven, we get the inside view of this mingled system and we see that it is full of corruption. The next two parables, however, the Treasure and the

Pearl, turn our attention to the brighter side of the picture, the hidden elements of good even in the heart of this mass of mingled elements. Finally, the parable of the Draw Net reveals the separation of the two elements in the day of judgment and at the end of the age.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

These seven parables bear a strong resemblance to the seven letters of the risen and ascended Lord to the Churches of Asia in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation. The first epistle to the Church in Ephesus reminds us of the parable of the Sower in Matt. xiii.; and the second, the dark picture of Smyrna and the power of evil recalls the parable of the Enemy and the sowing of the Tares. The Church in Pergamos is very much like the Mustard Tree. It is the picture of the outward prosperity and worldly power. The fourth Church in Revelation, Thyatira, is the very counterpart of the leaven. "That woman Jezebel" immediately recalls the woman that put the leaven in the three measures of meal. Both present to us a picture of inward corruption and impurity. The Church in Sardis, which "had a few names that had not defiled their garments,"

corresponds to the Treasure hid in a field, and the glorious Church of Philadelphia in Revelation is the very counterpart of the Pearl in Matthew. Both describe the true and hidden followers of Christ in the midst of the present evil age. Finally, the Church in Laodicea stands for the separation of the two classes when the Lord will "spue out of His mouth" the "lukewarm" and unfaithful and take the overcomers to sit with Him upon His throne.

Both these series present the plan of the age, substantially, and it does not take us long to see how utterly it is opposed to the popular theological ideas which underlie nearly all the current expositions of the Gospel and the teaching of the great mass of the ministers of the Church to-day. At the risk of seeming to oppose so great a mass of prevalent teaching and belief, let us endeavor fairly and honestly to grasp the thought of the Master in this first unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom.

THE SOWER.

I. The Planting of the Kingdom (Matt. xiii. 3-8). The parable of the Sower represents the preaching of the Gospel and its normal effects. The first thing that strikes

us is that in three cases out of four it seems to fail. This is not from any defect in the seed, but because of conditions in the soil. In the first three cases there are hindrances either to the reception or the growth and fruition of the seed.

In the first case, the soil is hard and the devil is waiting to steal away the seed through the fowls of the air, who are always on hand before it really lodges in the soil. In the second case, the soil itself is shallow and although there is a sudden and apparent result, it soon passes away. The seed springs up for an hour, but withers on the rocky field and all the husbandman's work is vain. In the third case, there is a good beginning made, but later "the thorns spring up and choke it," "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches" and other things bear down the better purposes that had been formed in the heart and the harvest is brought to naught.

These three clauses represent the devil, the flesh and the world, that old trinity that has ever been arrayed against the kingdom of God. The devil steals the seed in the first case, the flesh fails in the second, and the world finishes the process in the third. In one case only does the seed germinate and

mature, falling into good soil and honest hearts, souls that are sincere, consciences that are awakened, hearts that are hungering for God, wills that decide and settle their great resolves. The seed springs up and grows and brings forth fruit, "some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold."

This has ever been the story of the progress of the Gospel. It was the apostolic story; "some believed and some believed not," and it will be true to the end. This is no optimistic dream of the world rushing to embrace Christianity, but rather a somber picture of a small minority of the human race responding to the call of heaven and believing and obeying the gospel of Christ. It has ever been the case and it will be to the end.

THE TARES.

II. The Sowing of the Tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30). "While men slept, an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." It is not hard to identify this enemy. A more difficult question is, "Where did he sow the tares?" Does this parable teach that the Church is to be continually exposed to heresy, fanaticism and the unrestricted power of evil men and that we are to let this continue and make no effort to separate the evil from the

good in the church of God? No, not at all. It is not the church that is here the field. "The field is the world." This is the Master's own standard in interpreting these parables. It is right for us, as far as wise and watchful discipline can accomplish it, to purge out and keep out both error and wickedness from the church of Christ. That is our business, but, as the apostle puts it so well, "Them that are without, God judges." It is in the world that the enemy sows his tares; in immediate contact with the people of God and the church of Christ. And these things surround us in our family, social, civil and business life, inexorably and incessantly. And the teaching of the parable is that this mingled condition will exist till the end of the age.

We are not going to see any of our modern crusaders clean out these evils, the saloons, the social evil, or the political grafters. They will continue till the end. Our business is to plant and cultivate the good seed and let the good overcome the evil. But the separation God alone can make, and He will not make it until the end of the age. Our dreams of ideal social, ecclesiastical and political Utopias are all in the air and will end like dissolving rainbows. Our hope is farther on,—Christ and His blessed coming.

THE MUSTARD TREE.

III. The Rapid and the Universal Growth of the Mingled System of Good and Evil (Matt. xii. 31, 32). This appears in the Mustard Tree which suddenly shoots up its branches and spreads abroad its boughs and covers the earth with its shade until "the fowls of the air lodge in its branches." It has been customary to describe this as the encouraging symbol of the rapid growth of Christianity, and we have been deluged with figures of the millions that to-day comprise the Christian population of the globe. It is true that Christianity nominally controls the most powerful nations and holds under its influence the great proportion even of the non-Christian nations, but to call this the true kingdom of Jesus Christ would be a sad caricature. This great mass of several hundred millions of nominal Christians includes Roman Catholics, Greeks, Oriental Christians and vast numbers of Protestants, who are Christian only in name and who are worshipping Mammon and following the spirit of the world quite as much as their less civilized fellowmen.

It is just what the parable was meant to express—a great mass of mingled good and evil,

called Christendom. It is quite enough to condemn it that it is the harboring place of those "fowls of the air" which in the first parable "devoured" the good seed. It has room not only for God, but for every other god; not only for Christ, but for all the isms that outnumber to-day the deities of the ancient Pantheism. It is the Church in Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods and having need of nothing," but so swollen with pride and self-complacency that it has no room for Christ, and He is only separating the few true hearts from the mass until He shall spue it out of his mouth.

THE LEAVEN.

IV. The Hidden Corruption of Nominal Christianity (Matt. xiii. 33). The parable of the Leaven now follows in true logical order and gives us the vision of the inward character of the great mass of nominal Christianity. This too has been perverted in most of our modern religious teaching. The Leaven, according to these religious optimists, is the spreading of the Gospel, permeating and pervading gradually the whole mass of humanity till the whole shall be leavened and the world shall awake some fine morning to find itself at

last right side up and all the ills of all the ages ended in the poet's dream:

"When the war drum throbs no longer and the battle flag is furled,
In the Parliament of man and federation of the world."

Unfortunately the analogy of the Scriptures is all against this, quite as much as the facts of human history. Meal, in the Old Testament, is always a type of the good and not of the bad. The meal offering was one of the five great offerings of Moses. It is the good seed we have already seen in the parable, ground into a form fitted for wholesome food. Leaven, on the other hand, is always the symbol of evil. It stands for fermentation, corruption, sin. It was forbidden in the ancient Jewish Passover, and it is forbidden in the New Testament epistles. We are not only "to purge out the old leaven," but we are to be "unleavened." Leaven, therefore, represents in the parable the influence of evil and its silent, pervading and far-reaching power. It is the secret working of the same enemy who sowed the tares. It represents the unbelief, the worldliness, the selfishness, the license which to-day are slowly wearing down the barriers of faith, conscience and separation

even in the Church itself, and reducing society to one broad level of liberalism, humanitarianism and easy-going selfishness. The process is so apparent that in order to understand the parable, we need only to look round us and see the conditions of the Christian church to-day.

THE TREASURE.

V. The Hidden Elements of Good. But is this all, we naturally ask? Is there no brighter vision? Is there no other element? Is it all corruption? We turn to the next two parables and we behold a cheering contrast in the parable of the Treasure and the Pearl (Matt. xiii. 44). These represent the good side of the inner life of Christendom. The first of these two parables, the Treasure hid in the field, appears to stand for Israel during the present age; the second, the Pearl, for the church of Jesus Christ, containing only His holy and hidden ones. Israel was to disappear from the foreground because of her rejection of the Lord, but Israel was to have a remnant which would continue through the Christian age to represent God's chosen people and to claim at last their ancient covenant when Christ shall come again, and Israel shall come forth from the obscurity and suffering of all these sad

ages to be the Queen of nations on the Millennial earth. Israel is always God's earthly people, the church His heavenly people. Therefore, this treasure is "hid in the field," which means this world. Israel during the present age is hidden and in retirement from the stage of the prophecy, but it is for Israel's sake that God is preserving this old earth and is by and by to restore it and make it new.

Therefore we read that for the sake of that treasure, the Lord sold all that He had and bought the field in which the treasure was hidden. This is not said about the pearl. The pearl was taken out of the field, but the treasure remained in it. Israel is to remain on earth and at the Lord's return is to have the dominion of the earth. This is finely brought out in the symbolism of the parable, and as we thus understand it, a beautiful light is shed upon both the parable and the prophecies of Scripture concerning Israel.

The use of the word "treasure" is peculiarly appropriate to Israel. It is constantly employed in the Old Testament concerning God's chosen people. "He hath chosen Jacob for His peculiar treasure." "The Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." These are but some of the numerous references to Israel as the Lord's treasure.

THE PEARL.

VI. The Place of the Church in the Plan of the Ages (Matt. xiii. 45, 46).

This is finely set forth in the parable of the Pearl of great price. Unfortunately, this has been so often applied to Christ by inconsiderate teachers and expounders of the Scriptures that it is difficult to accustom Bible students to look at its true meaning. It does not describe Christ at all in this parable, for He is the One that found the Pearl and gave all that He had to purchase it. Rather, it represents His people whom He describes as His jewels. More strictly speaking, it stands for the Bride of the Lamb, not Christians individually, but the whole body of His chosen ones as they shall at last be gathered and glorified at His coming, and as John describes them in the Apocalypse, in that vision of glory where the Lamb's wife is presented in the sublime imagery of all the combined jewels known to man. The description of the sacrifice by which the Lord obtained this pearl is applicable only to Him. How truly "He sold all that He had" that He might buy His people! How true it is that He has bought them and redeemed them from sin, Satan, death and hell to be a peculiar

people unto Himself, and how beautiful the figure of the Pearl under which they are represented as united and glorified to adorn His crown in the New Jerusalem!

It will be noticed that just before giving these two parables, the Lord Jesus withdrew from the multitude and "came into the house," vividly signifying by His act that these parables that He was about to speak had a more personal and intimate relation to His own disciples, while the others related rather to the world and the multitude. His significant action should also be noted in the very beginning of this series of parables, when we are told that He went out of the house and sat down by the seaside. His going out of the house was significant of His leaving Israel and turning to the Gentiles. They had now rejected His overtures of grace and He went forth from them to the world, always represented in the Bible by the sea and its troubled waters. His first act, therefore, was to retire from Israel and give utterance to the parables that related to the Gentile world and the Christian age. His next symbolic act was to withdraw from the multitude and come into the house, again symbolizing his messages to His hidden ones in the parable of the Treasure and the Pearl.

THE DRAW NET.

VII. The Final Separation.

The parable of the Draw Net is the picture of the separation that is to come at last when the Lord Himself shall appear (Matt. xiii. 47-50). He and His angelic ministers alone can make this separation. Man has tried long and vainly to eliminate the evil from the world. Wiser and stronger hands are needed for the task and those hands are soon to undertake it.

Meanwhile the net is drawing "of every kind" from the great sea of human life, and slowly the cords are being drawn to the eternal shore, where at last the hands of mighty angels "shall sever the wicked from among the just and cast them into a furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," and "the righteous shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

How very solemn is the picture of this mysterious draw net. How it suggests to us the silent and inevitable progress of time as the age is insensibly and yet inexorably rolling on to this awful crisis. What a touching spectacle those countless fishes, as they suddenly find themselves within the barriers of the enclosing net and vainly struggle to escape its meshes and get out into the freedom of the sea.

Closer and closer draw those barriers as they dash from side to side and vainly struggle to escape. For a little they may think that they are free as they pass from one side to the other of prison; but lo, they strike again upon the farther side and are hurled back into the writhing mass in the center, until the cords are tightened and with a sudden jerk the whole mass is hurled upon the strand, struggling, writhing, gasping for breath, and finding themselves helpless and hopeless in a new element in which they have never lived before.. Such is the picture of human life as the age rolls on. For a time men think that they are free as they follow their own will in the great unconfined ocean of human life. But every little while there is something to remind them that God's great net of Providence and destiny is thrown around them and that a force unseen is steadily drawing them to the eternal strand. Every little while, something reminds them that they are being drawn to that eternal shore. Sometimes, it is the death of a friend, sometimes it is the solemn voice of reason and conscience reminding them that they are born to die. Then they strike out again and claim their liberty and refuse to listen to their fears. Closer and closer the lines are drawing, and some day they shall find themselves swept into

that strange eternal world which will be as foreign to them as the ocean strand to the helpless fishes of the sea. Then mighty hands will make the final separation. Our struggles, our pleas will be in vain and each of us will find himself and herself taking the place forevermore for which we have been preparing here.

Well might the Master ask His little class of wondering disciples, after they had listened to these strange, deep teachings, "Have ye understood these things?" God help us to understand them and live "under the power of the age to come."

Chapter IX.

CHRIST'S FAREWELL TO GALILEE.

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence" (Matt. xiii. 53).

AS we have already seen, the Parables of the Kingdom marked a stage in the rejection of the Lord Jesus and His withdrawal from the people that had refused these parables, we are now told that He departed from their midst.

Not all at once did He leave Galilee and the scenes of the past three years of His active ministry; but this was the beginning of the end. Gradually He commenced to withdraw. His back was turned on the scenes of His former labors, and, after a few lingering visits and last messages, at length He took His final farewell, and spent the last six months of His life in Judea and the regions about, returning no more to Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin and the cities where most of His mighty works had been done.

NAZARETH.

I. His Last Visit to Nazareth. The first step in his retirement was one more visit to

Nazareth, the city where He had been brought up (Matt. xiii. 54).

We may remember how, on a former occasion, He had been rejected here, and they had even sought His life and carried Him to the brow of the precipice on which the city was built, to hurl Him to death. We have also seen how even His mother and His brethren had concluded that He was insane, and had sought to restrain Him. Once more He visits these old scenes of His childhood, but His message is not received; His personality is altogether too familiar for these proud Jews; they know too much about Him to accept Him as a Rabbi, much less as a Prophet sent from God. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" they say. "Is not his mother called Mary and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? And they were offended in Him."

This was the spirit of pure prejudice. What difference does it make about a man's family connections if he has a message from God and is himself a true man? It was that old spirit of prejudice that has so often kept people back from their best blessings. The effect of it was to send the Lord away and prevent Him from doing many mighty works because of their unbelief, and, as He left, he repeated the old

proverb which has so often been true. "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house."

DEATH OF JOHN.

II. The Death of John the Baptist, His Forerunner (Matt. xiv., 1-12).

A little while before this, John, languishing in prison because of his fearless courage in denouncing the sin of Herod and his paramour, had become discouraged and sent a message to Christ, pathetically asking whether He was indeed the Messiah that was to come, or whether they were to look for another. Now, at length, the tragedy reaches its climax.

That wicked woman had long been waiting for her opportunity to wreak her final vengeance on the brave man that had dared to challenge her crimes. At length the opportunity arrives. Seated in his banquet hall among his lords, and already half drunk with wine, Herod suddenly becomes infatuated with the bold and beautiful dancing of Salome, the fair daughter of his unlawful wife, and, in a fit of rashness, promises her with an oath to give her anything that she chooses to ask. Already instructed by her cunning mother, who has been waiting for this hour, she immediate-

ly asks for the head of John the Baptist. The king was shocked and distressed, for he really was attached to John, but a false pride about the keeping of his oath left him no escape, and so the executioner was despatched, and in a few minutes the ghastly, bloody trophy was borne by those fair hands on a charger to her horrid mother, and the work of the great prophet was done. Johns' disciples, as soon as they heard of it, buried the body, and then "went and told Jesus." The effect of it upon Christ was very distressing. He loved John and grieved for his sad fate, but He also saw in it the certain harbinger of his own approaching death, and so He immediately retired for a little season that He might rest and also comfort the sorrowing disciples.

The story of John's murder has many fine lessons in which our present space will not permit us to dwell at length, but we cannot refrain from noticing the length to which human unbelief and sin will dare to go. The vile woman and weak man had refused the message of God through John, convicting them of their sin, and perhaps they never thought that they would go farther. But now we find their rejection of God's word leading them on to malignant hate and bloody crime. So sin pursues its terrible progression in every age,

and, when we disobey God, we never know where the last step of our downward course is to land us. And what a lesson this is on worldliness. Mr. Spurgeon might well say that whenever he saw a dance he felt a little nervous about the throat, and remembered that the first Baptist preacher lost his head on account of one. Our business is not to start crusades against the ballroom, but rather to get men right with God; but, when they are right with God; they will not want these things. What a lesson also of the folly of recklessness. Herod's hasty words caused him the violation of his conscience, the murder of his friend, and the eternal ruin of his soul. If we have sinned by speaking rashly, let us not add to our sin by completing the rash act as well as the reckless word. Far better break the foolish vow than keep it, if it is wrong.

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

III. The Crisis and Climax of Christ's Galilean Ministry. In the next section of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter xiv., 14-20, our Lord's ministry in Galilee reached its crisis and its climax, the highest point of His love

and power and the deepest depth of human unbelief and rejection.

After the death of John the Baptist, He retired for a time to the solitudes on the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee for the quiet that both He and His disciples needed. But the multitude would allow Him no rest. They thronged upon Him, and waited all day long in eager attention to His words of grace and His works of healing, love and power. At length, as the evening drew on, the Master felt the deepest compassion for the multitude, and He turned to His disciples and asked them about providing food for the people. But their little faith utterly broke down before such a prospect. Their limited means were only sufficient to purchase a mere morsel for such a crowd, and they had as yet no conception of the great miracle which He was waiting to perform. One among them, Andrew, in some degree was equal to the occasion and brought forward the little lad with his barley loaves and fishes as the only apparent solution of the difficulty, but even he gave up with the despairing cry, "What are these among so many?" Then the Master summoned the disciples to the great miracle which he had been planning all the time. Making the multitude sit down upon

the grass, He distributed the loaves and fishes to them, and they to the multitude, until all did eat and were filled, and they found remaining at the close twelve baskets full of the fragments of the fishes. This tremendous miracle demonstrated His power over nature as nothing else had done before. Little wonder that the crowd was filled with admiration and astonishment, and, as John tells us, they insisted at once upon taking Him by force and making Him a King. This was what Matthew means when he speaks of the Lord sending the multitudes away, while He at the same time sent His disciples across the sea in their little ship. Probably He knew that they would be just as likely as the crowd to join in the clamor that He should take upon Him the honors the multitude were thrusting upon Him. A nobler Kingdom was coming to Him in a little while through His Father's gift and His own glorious victory over sin and Satan and the grave.

Therefore, He refused to accept the crown from the foolish and impulsive mob who were ready to worship Him to-day and crucify Him to-morrow. Refusing their proffered honors, He dismissed them to their homes and then withdrew to the solitudes of the mountain to communion with His Father in prayer, while His little band of disciples were struggling

with the waves and winds on their voyage to the other side. All this was strongly typical of the history of the age which was soon to follow.

That miracle of the feeding of the five thousand was a striking type of the Gospel dispensation and the feeding of the world's famine with the bread of life through the faith of Christ's Disciples. His ascension of the mountain was a type of His ascension to the Father's right hand, where to-day He is praying for the little flock as they battle with the winds and waves on the sea of life. His coming to them in the early morning watch is yet to be more closely fulfilled in His second advent, and, as of old, the moment He entered the ship they found themselves at the land whither they went, so again His coming is to bring all our ships ashore, to remedy all our wrongs, and to acomplish all the purposes that hitherto failed.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT.

The Gospel of St. John should be read in connection with the Gospel of Matthew in its picture of this series of incidents. Matthew tells us of the Scribes and Pharisees that came up from Jerusalem at this time and got into another argument with the Lord about

questions of ceremony and tradition. But John tells us of a still more important conversation that occurred in the synagogue at Capernaum the Sabbath after the feeding of the five thousand. We find the account of them remarkably discussed in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. It is there in the Master's discourse on the living bread that He reaches the loftiest height of spiritual teaching that His discussions had attempted heretofore. There He unfolds to them, with the deepest spirituality, the great mystery of our spiritual life and our personal union with Him as our living Head. The effect of these teachings was to perplex and alienate almost all His remaining followers in Galilee. They could not understand such deep spiritual teachings. They perfectly comprehended the supply of earthly bread, but how He could be their living bread and supply the very life of their souls was mysticism to them, and they turned away, saying, "It is a hard saying, who can hear it?" And John adds that from that day many of His disciples left Him and walked no more with Him, so that even to His own disciples He turned with deep pathos and asked, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered for them, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

TURNING AWAY OF HIS FOLLOWERS.

Therefore, this whole incident marked the crisis, as we have already said, of His ministry in Galilee. He had reached its highest point, and from this time the multitude forsook Him as well as the malignant leaders of the ecclesiastical party. They looked upon Him as a strained fanatic, impracticable and even unwilling to accept the earthly honors and powers they were willing to confer upon Him, that they might share with Him the temporal benefit which was the only advantage which they really understood or cared for. For deeper spiritual things they had no taste.

Alas, they were typical of multitudes to-day in the church of Jesus Christ! The crisis which happened in Galilee will happen yet again in the story of the ages. Even in the church to-day we are bound to find traces of a turning away from deeper spiritual teaching on the part of the followers of Christ. They are willing to accept the temporal advantages of Christianity and its universal moral and social benefits. They are willing to believe in it as a remedy for the future and a means of escaping future punishment for sin; but as marking a life of deliverance from the power of sin and communion and fellowship with

God, they do not understand it; they do not desire it. All this is but mysticism and impractical dreaming, and the picture of the seven Churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation tells us that a time is coming when the great masses of Christendom will reject a deeply spiritual Christianity and turn away from the Lord, even as His Galilean followers.

From this time, the Lord's work in Galilee was practically closed. True, He lingered for a while on its borders, going and coming for a few weeks longer on His various detours, but He had practically withdrawn from the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, and when we do see Him again among the Galileans it is in the country of Decapolis, on the farther shore, either among the Gentiles, or at their borders.

TYRE AND SIDON.

IV. His Journey to the Gentile Region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. xv., 21-29). Mark tells us that He went away with the view of getting quiet, and had first stopped for privacy in a house, but he adds, "He could not be hid." Immediately a woman of the country, a Gentile and a heathen, appealed first to His disciples and then to Him for help for her afflicted daughter, who was possessed with an evil spirit. The disciples appealed to the Master

in vain to grant her request or stop her clamor by sending her away. She turned from them and renewed her pleading with the Master Himself, but His first answer seemed to shut the door in her very face, by telling her that the limitations of His commission as a Son of David and the Messiah of Israel forbade His extending His ministry to those who, like her, were outside the pale of Israel. He was perfectly truthful in this, and His answer was in strict accord with the Gospel of Matthew and the picture of the King which it presents. But she must have seen something in His glance that gave her hope and assurance, for she still pressed her suit, and, when argument failed, she clung to His feet with impassioned entreaty and cried, "Lord, help me!"

Then came the severest repulse of all, adding, it almost seemed, insult to injury, as He shut her out with harsh reproof, and answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." It was then that her desperation inspired the highest faith of which we have any record in the New Testament. Without a word of self-defence, she took the place to which He had assigned her, as not only a Gentile dog, but as something far worse, for which that word always stood in the Old

Testament—one of the degraded ones who had sinned even against nature itself. "I am a dog," she acknowledged. "I deserve all you say. I have no excuse, but I plead my very misery as my plea. I take the sinner's place, and I simply claim the sinner's portion. The very dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, and a crumb is all I ask." It was then that the Lord revealed the deep, intense love that had been waiting all through this trial of her faith to give it its great reward. "Oh, woman," He answered, "great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Thus, the Master, rejected by His own people, had turned to the Gentiles and had been met by a faith which had not hitherto been found even in Israel. A type it was of the coming days, when the Gospel should be given to the Gentiles of every tribe and tongue and should bring forth such fruits of faith as she had given the first example of. But, the very glory of this victory of human faith and divine power only deepened the more the dark shadow of Israel's unbelief. The Lord had now turned away from His own people and was beginning to find the door of faith closed to them and opening to the Gentile world.

FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND.

V. His Last Visit to the Lake of Galilee. (Matthew xv. 29 to xvi. 12.) Returning from this Gentile region, the Lord made one more visit to the Galilean shores, remaining chiefly still on the eastern side, among the cities of Decapolis. Here a great multitude soon gathered round Him, and a second time He performed the miracle of multiplying the bread, feeding on this occasion four thousand, as a little before He had fed the five thousand.

Chapter X.

THE GLORY OF THE KING.

"And after six days, Jesus taketh with Him Peter, James and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart and was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the light, and behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him" (Matt. xvii. 1-8).

THE transfiguration of Christ marked a turning point in His life and ministry. Up to that moment His path had ascended in successive revelations of His grace and glory until at last in that manifestation of His glory and majesty on Hermon's Height, the veil of His humiliation for a moment was wholly cast aside and His disciples beheld Him in His primeval glory and in the glory of His second coming by and bye.

But from this moment the pathway descended down through the lonely valley of humiliation, suffering and rejection until at last it led to the agony and mystery of the Garden, the Cross and the Grave.

PURPOSE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.

The transfiguration also marked the close of

His Galilean ministry. We have already seen that He was preparing for some time previously to leave the scenes of His ministry for the past three years. He had gone up to the heathen region of Tyre and Sidon, and on His return he had still lingered on the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee in the country of Decapolis, which was semi-heathen. But soon after the transfiguration He withdrew altogether from the northern region, where most of His mighty works had been done, and, for the next six months, we find Him in Judea, Perea and the country round about Jerusalem.

The purpose of His transfiguration was perhaps, primarily, for His own encouragement and comfort, in view of the trying conditions through which He was passing and was soon to pass. His ministry of love and His miracles of power had been met by unbelief and bitter rejection, and before Him there loomed the darker shadows of His seeming failure and His cruel death.

Looking down the immediate pathway, the heavy shadows of that awful tragedy that ended at last on Calvary opened before Him, and the hour was one which needed, as never before, the encouragement of that heavenly vision which came to Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Henceforth, He looked not at the

valley of the shadow of death just before Him, but at the sunlit heights immediately beyond, and "for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

But the second object of the transfiguration was for the comfort and encouragement of His disciples. They had just begun to understand from His own announcements that their fond dream of an earthly kingdom through the Messiah was to be rudely dispelled; and that, instead of honor, power and earthly prosperity, they were to go forth to share His shame and cross and to seek their kingdom not in this world but on the other side of the grave. It was therefore necessary that they, too, should have a vivid conception of the divine character of the Master they were following at such tremendous cost and the reward that they were expecting at the end of all their trials and sufferings. All this was assured them in that midnight vision on the Mount when they beheld, first, His glory, and, secondly, their own, as it was set forth in the appearance of Moses and Elijah, who "appeared in glory," as patterns and types of the glory which awaits every believer who follows Christ to the end.

AN OBJECT LESSON.

There was a further purpose in the heaven-

ly vision, and perhaps the most important of all, namely: an object lesson of certain truths which the Lord had been proclaiming to His disciples during the past few weeks, and which were set forth in a most striking manner in the vision of the transfiguration. He had taken them up on this northern journey, through the beautiful regions of Ceserea Philippi, as a sort of summer school, for the purpose of talking to them calmly and fully of the great truths of the kingdom which it was necessary that they should fully understand, and, after He had fully explained these truths to them in word, He took them up on the Mount that night and gave them a vivid illustration of them in the glorious scenes of the transfiguration.

HIS MESSIAHSHIP.

The first of these truths was His own divinity and Messiahship. "Whom say men that I, the Son of man, am?" was the question with which the discussion had begun, and, after they had told Him the various opinions of the people, He asked them more directly, "But whom say ye that I am?" It was then that Peter uttered the great confession, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," which Jesus told him had been revealed to Him, not

by flesh and blood, but by His Father in heaven (Matt. xvi. 13-17).

Now, the transfiguration was a special and emphatic confirmation of this. First, the voice of God Himself from the overshadowing cloud: "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him!" was a distinct acknowledgment of the deity of Christ, accompanied with the manifestation of the glory of God in the illuminated cloud which was the unmistakable pledge of the divine Presence. The special command, "Hear ye Him," was a distinct acknowledgment of His superior claims to both Moses and Elijah. Hitherto, they had been hearing the voice of the Lawgiver and the voice of the Prophets, but now they were to hear Him as God's last and supreme messenger to man. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past to our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son."

Further, the appearance of Moses and Elijah in a place of subordination to Him and as messengers and ministers who simply waited upon His superior Majesty was a still further confirmation to the disciples that He was indeed the Messiah whom Moses and the prophets had foretold, and that their authority ended with His coming, even as the stars

pale at the rising of the sun. To make the dramatic scene more effective, they, after they had waited upon Him in the vision, vanished away as a token that their ministry and their messages had given place to His, and the disciples "lifted up their eyes and saw no man save Jesus only." Thus, the whole scene was a most striking and impressive confirmation "of Peter's testimony and His own claim that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. xvi. 16).

HIS DEATH.

The next truth which He had unfolded to the disciples on their journey northward was quite different from this. "From that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things of the leaders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from the Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." But He turned and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offense unto Me, for thou savorest not of the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Matt. xvi. 22, 23).

This was his first explicit announcement of

His crucifixion. It came as a shock to the disciples, and Peter, their impetuous spokesman, had no hesitation in expressing their utter dissent and protest against any such doctrine. He did not want a crucified Saviour. He wanted a glorious and popular Messiah, subduing all earthly as well as spiritual enemies and providing a kingdom in the present as well as in the future for his faithful followers. This doctrine of the Cross was repugnant to all Peter's pride and ambition, and still more so to his love for his Master. But Peter only represented the natural thought of the human heart. Man does not want a crucified Saviour. The doctrine of the Cross too deeply recognizes the fact of human sin and the need of blood and sacrifice to wash it away. And further, it implies the painful and humbling truth that, for the disciple as well as the Master, there must also be a cross. If our Lord is crucified, we must also deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. If the world rejects Him, it will also reject us; if He must die for our sins, we must die to our sins. Men do not like this at all, and, therefore, the cross has always been and always will be unpopular with the world.

Little wonder today that it is being questioned and rejected even by the worldly

Church. But all such ideas are more repugnant to our Lord than His cross was to His disciples. "Thou art an offense to Me," He says to His favorite disciple the moment he begins to question the precious doctrine of His death. What must He think of those in His very church who today are heaping dishonor upon the doctrine of the blood and trying to find a way to heaven aside from the blood-stained pathway of Calvary's Cross.

The transfiguration was a fine object lesson of the estimation in which the heavenly beings hold the cross of Christ. This scene was a sort of drama in which the disciples were spectators and stood gazing upon a stage on which great truths were being set forth in dramatic action. They stood listening to the strange conversation of the glorious beings that had come forth from the upper world to bear witness to their Master. These two that appeared that night on Hermon's Height were the most illustrious men that had ever lived. One of them was the great lawgiver himself, reverenced by every Hebrew next to Jehovah Himself, Moses, the founder of their Jewish theocracy and the giver of their venerated law. The other was the great Elijah, the mighty prophet who had come in the darkest hour of the nation's sin, and, after performing mira-

cles unprecedented even among the mightiest of the prophets, including the raising of men from the dead, had at last himself swept to heaven in a chariot of fire without the intervention of death.

There could be no doubt to any Hebrew mind about the authority and importance of such witnesses as these. But now, these two illustrious men appeared in a posture of inferiority to the Lord Jesus, their glorious Master, uniting in the Father's testimony to His majesty, and, still more, bearing witness to His sufferings and death by speaking of that event as the one sole theme of their conversation. Looking at this wonderful spectacle, it must have seemed to the wondering disciples that the chief theme in the heavenly world was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And it is still true that if we could pierce yonder heavens and listen for a moment to the songs and conferences of the heavenly beings above, we would find them engaged in the same great theme. In the book of Revelation the apostle John has lifted the curtain upon that world, and the one song they sing and the one theme they celebrate is thus expressed: "Worthy is the Lamb

that was slain to receive riches and honor and glory and blessing."

Dear friends, let us cherish and honor the cross of Jesus Christ, the badge of His shame before the world that rejected Him, but the glorious theme which ransomed saints and holy angels ever celebrate above.

HIS COMING.

Once more, the transfiguration bore testimony to the Master's word concerning His second coming. This also had been one of the themes of conversation in their journey northward. The Lord had just reminded them of the utter worthlessness of every earthly thing compared with the value of the never-dying soul and then had added, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then shall He reward every man according to his works."

The Lord had then added the very significant announcement, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28). At first sight, this almost looks like an announcement that some of the disciples should never die, but live on to the actual coming of the Lord Jesus. This, however, is not necessary. The words are

sufficiently fulfilled if we understand them to mean that the transfiguration which followed shortly after was an actual exhibition and illustration of the words "coming in His kingdom," and that in seeing it they practically saw His kingdom come. This is more impressive when we note the next verse in the opening of the seventeenth chapter, which seems to follow as a direct explanation of this announcement: "After six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter and James and John and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart and was transfigured before them." This, then, was what He meant when He said that they should see Him coming into His kingdom. The transfiguration was a revelation of His coming, and the more we look at it the more will we be struck with its complete foreshadowing of the second advent.

In the first place, the Father was there standing behind the scene and manifesting to the world the glory of Jesus Christ as His Son. This is to be fulfilled when Christ shall come again. He will come in the glory of His Father; He will occupy the center of the stage, and He will be the judge and the King, and all the splendors of that hour shall cluster around His person and His throne.

Next, the presence of Moses on the Mount

represented the resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming. Moses had died at Mount Nebo, and God had evidently raised him from the dead and brought him back to take part in the scenes of the transfiguration. He stands, therefore, for that glorious multitude who sleep in Jesus, whom the Lord will bring with Him at His return.

Then Elijah stands for another class, the living saints of God who shall be on earth at the time of Christ's coming and who shall suddenly be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air. Elijah did not die, but was translated to Heaven in a chariot of fire, and so we are taught that when our Lord returns "we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." And again we read, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump."

The apostle Peter was one the three disciples who saw this glorious event on the mount. He refers to it in his second epistle, and he speaks of it as specially designed to set forth "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus," and, as we take in all the circumstances of that glorious scene, there is nothing that more sublimely or accurately sets forth the chief events

connected with the blessed hope of our Master's coming.

LESSONS.

Let us gather up some practical conclusions from this sublime story.

1. It tells us of the closer fellowship into which the Lord Jesus brings some of His disciples. There were three of the twelve only who saw this vision. The other nine remained below and passed through that night, as we read a little later, in a troubled and fruitless conflict with the adversary; but the three were taken apart and caught up to meet the Lord on the mountain top, and behold His glory. We find the same three disciples taken into His intimate fellowship on two other occasions, once at the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and again as the companions of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. They represented that closer fellowship into which the Lord Jesus takes those who are willing to follow Him all the way. All that this means now and is to mean bye and bye would be difficult to express, but surely it means enough to make us covet that wondrous promise and let nothing rob us of its blessing, "Unto him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and on that stone a new name written which no man

knoweth save he to whom it is given." There is a difference now, and, Oh! there will be a difference then between those that have followed Him fully and those that have hesitated to go with Him all the way.

2. It tells us of the hours of elevation and revelation which come to us amid the trials and pressures of the present. That transfiguration then was given to comfort both them and Him at a real crisis in their lives and His, and so the Lord Jesus gives His people still hours of vision and revelation when they are elevated above the clouds and shadows of the present and permitted to come into closer touch with eternal things. Not always should we look for these celestial uplifts; it would not be wholesome. Two or three times in his life, the apostle Paul had such special visitations from his Master, and then the ordinary current of his life and work was commonplace and without special revelation. Just as the mariner takes his observations when the stars shine out and the clouds flee away, and sails by this light for many a stormy day, so God gives to us as we need them these uplifts and hours of elevation.

Let us thank Him for them and say with the Psalmist, "I will remember Thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites"—that is,

the heights of Hermon, where David also had his transfiguration hours.

3. It tells us that our loved ones who have left us are living, happy and glorified, and that they are coming back again some day to meet us. In the resurrection glory of Moses and Elijah, there shines a great light that drives away the darkness of the grave and wipes away the tears of the mourner. They are living beyond, they are not dead; they are active, intelligent, busy and happy, and we shall be with them in a little while and cease to sigh

> "For the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still."

4. It tells us of the blessed hope of the Lord's coming as the pole star of our lives and the inspiration of our labors and sufferings. Let us never forget it, but be ever "looking for and hastening forward the coming of our Lord."

5. It tells us of something higher even than the transfiguration. The scene that followed the vision on the Mount is even finer than the vision itself. It is the victory of Jesus Christ at the foot of the Mount on the following morning over the power of Satan. When they came down, they found a terrible scene;

an agonized father with a lunatic boy torn by demon possession and the little company of the disciples vainly trying to cast out the evil spirit while the people were looking on with mingled sympathy for the father and scorn for the baffled disciples. There seems to have been something unusual even in the Lord's appearance, for Mark tells that as the people looked at Him: "When they beheld him they were greatly amazed." There must have been something in His face and bearing that bore the traces of the glory of the night before. Certainly there was a power that had not yet appeared, for in a moment that whole scene of defeat and despair was changed to victory, the demon cast out of the living child, and the father and multitude filled with wonder at the mighty power of God.

Need we pause to make the application: How it tells of the purpose of our transfiguration, to prepare us for the conflicts and the ministries that await us in this sad world below? We go not up to the Mount of Transfiguration to "build three tabernacles," that we may stay forever there, but rather to get a touch of heaven to bring down to the dark, sad world in the valley below. Oh, that we might come forth clothed with the power which they beheld in Him, to live transfigured lives among

our fellow men and to share with them the glory which we have caught upon the Mount of Vision. Surely, this is something higher than nursing sanctification, seeking our blessing and being satisfied with our visions.

There was deep significance in the old legend of the two men that entered the celestial portals. The first was white robed and stainless, and, when asked by the warder whence he had come and how his garments were so clean, he told how he had just passed a poor struggling traveler on the earth below whose cart had become entangled in a great swamp and how he had begged him to help him to extricate it, and with what difficulty and pain he had escaped the urgent call and kept his garments spotless to meet his Lord.

The second pilgrim followed, and his robes were soiled with mire and grime. Flushing crimson with shame, he explained that he had tried his best to keep his garments clean, but that, just as he reached the portals, he found a struggling wayfarer vainly trying to get his cart out of a quagmire, and that he could not refuse to put his shoulder to the wheel and help him out of his trouble, "and so," he added, "the marks are still on my once spotless robes."

But the angel smiled and said, "My broth-

er, those stains will not hinder your welcome here, for, lo! while we speak, you will find that they are transformed into jewels of glory, and they are shining upon your garments as the badges and recompense of that love which is the highest glory of our sanctity and the brightest jewel in our crown.

Dear friends, shall we not only climb the Mount of Transfiguration with the Master, but, oh! shall we learn to come down from the mountain to live the transfigured life of love below?

Chapter XI.

THE KINGDOM AND THE HOME.

"And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 2).

THE home is one of the few relics left us of the old Eden life before the Fall. Like some precious jewel shining out of its rocky bed in the midst of great rent fragments of dissolved mountains, so the family remains as a memento of the world's bright morning and a pledge of the eternal home in which the tragedy of sin and the drama of redemption are at last to end. No wonder that Christ recognized, both by His teaching and example, the sacredness of the home. The first half of both the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Matthew is devoted to His teaching concerning the family, the first section, with a verse or two in the second relating to children; the second section to the Christian law of marriage.

CHRIST AND THE CHILDREN.

1. No more beautiful teaching was ever giv-

en than the Lord Jesus gave His disciples, and, through them, to the future Christian church in these verses.

INFLUENCE OF A CHILD.

1. The Child in the Midst. "He called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them." This is a typical picture. When the patriarchal age was at its crisis, it was the birth of a little child, Isaac, the seed of promise, that formed the central picture of God's dealings with Abraham and Israel, and through that little child came all the future history of the chosen people. When Egypt's bondage had reached its height and deliverance was about to break upon their dark night, again it was a little child in that ark of bulrushes in the Nile that became the central figure of the world's history and the leader, law-giver and founder of the Theocracy of Israel. When, centuries later, a still more bitter bondage had held the nation enslaved to the Canaanites, again it was a little child who became the instrument of God's deliverance, and around Samuel's cradle clustered all the revelations of God and the hopes of Israel, and he became the great Reformer and Deliverer of his people and the real founder of the kingdom of David and Solomon. And once again, when the world was

waiting for its Redeemer, it was a little child that came to Bethlehem's manger as the Incarnate Son of God and the Saviour of mankind.

Enter the homes of any civilized, or almost any uncivilized land, and the strongest force still found on earth is the influence of a little child. What will that mother not do or dare for her babe? To her, notwithstanding all her toil and care, that child is the loveliest character on earth, and the true motive of every sacrifice and labor. The bread winner, as he toils from day to day, finds his labor alleviated as he sits down at night in his humble home and dandles upon his knee the little child who is the motive and recompense of his toil. And, when that little one lies fever-stricken, sinking into the arms of death, what would not those parents give for that precious life, and what would they take in exchange for one little child. And when that tender lamb, as often happens, is removed to the upper fold, perhaps there is no power so strong to draw the hearts of men and women from earth to heaven. The Scotch fishermen, after toiling all day long under murky skies and amid stormy waves in their fishing craft, steer for home by the beacon lights held by their little children on the shore, and, when the mists are too dense to see the lights, they can hear the songs of the

little ones as they call their fathers homeward. So many a heart has heard the voices that are calling to the better land and has turned away from earth and sin to live for God and heaven for the blessed hope of meeting once more some little child. Yes, and could we enter within those curtains that hide the heavenly world, we would behold an innumerable company of happy spirits beyond, but more than fifty to one would be little children. If it be true that Christ has redeemed the little ones who die before the age of responsibility, and if it be also true that more than half the human family have died thus early, and if it be a fact, that out of the sixty generations that have passed since Christ ascended to heaven, it would be a large estimate to say that ten millions of each generation has consisted of saved adults. It is an easy sum in arithmetic to compare these six hundred millions with the thirty billions of little children that have died during the same period, so that in heaven as well as on earth it is still true that He has set the little children in the midst. Some time we shall thank Him that He has taken our loved ones home in infancy, that we may have the beauty and gladness of childhood with us even there.

THE CHILD SPIRIT.

2. The Child as a Type of True Conversion. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). The spirit of a child is the true picture of a new-born soul, for childhood tells of birth, and salvation begins with a new birth. Childhood comes forth naked and empty-handed; so the new-born soul begins at nothing. Childhood has an infinite capacity for trusting and receiving; so conversion begins with believing in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and taking as a free gift His grace. Childhood is a state of utter dependence. A little child has to lean upon a strong arm, and the true child of God must learn to lean upon Christ and draw all his strength from Him as completely as the babe lives upon its mother's life and leans upon its mother's arm.

3. A Little Child is the Type of the Highest Christian Life. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." While childhood represents the beginning of Christian life, it also represents its highest attainments. Especially is this noticeable in the one feature of humility. Older people often

try to be humble, but the little child is humble without trying. It is that true humility which does not consist in demeaning ourselves, as some people seem to think, but of not thinking of ourselves at all. A little child may be placed in the most conspicuous place, or it may be crawling upon the carpet: it is alike unconscious of itself, and, the moment it becomes self-conscious, it loses the charm of childhood altogether. The greatest service you can render to your little ones is to keep them simple and free from self-consciousness and self-importance. This is the highest charm of Christian character, and it is uniform fruit and evidence of spiritual maturity and deep communion with the Master. Again, the child teaches us much about unworldliness. It is as well pleased with the tinsel ornament as the jewelled crown; it knows not and cares not for the difference. Its mother's smile is more to it than all the applause of shouting multitudes, and so it speaks to us of deadness to the world in that supreme sense which comes from devotedness to God, and a heart absorbed and satisfied in Him. Another thing about childhood is its instinctive life. It does not reason things out, but it senses them. It is largely a life of intuition. And the deepest spiritual life is not a life of great knowledge and human

wisdom, as much as intense fellowship with the mind of the Master, and a perfect intuition of His very thought and will. It is Christ so living, thinking and working in us to will and do of his good pleasure, that we just think God's thoughts after God, and are in constant touch with the mind and heart of Christ. Great simplicity, therefore, characterizes the advanced saint, and his life becomes more and more a leaning upon the Lord and walking in constant heart touch with Christ, like the beloved disciple, on the Master's bosom. It is a sort of glorified childhood. And, when we speak of the two qualities of faith and love that constitute the very heart of Christianity, and the highest crown of sainthood, where shall we learn them, as from the little child, unless it be from Him who was not ashamed to compare Himself with the spirit of a child.

HIS REPRESENTATIVE.

4. The Little Child is the Representative of Jesus Christ. This is what He meant when He said, "Whosoever shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me." (Matt. xviii. 5). He has placed that babe in our midst as His own little ambassador to speak for Him, to remind us of Him, and to receive our min-

istries for Him. He Himself was once as young, as feeble, as helpless as that babe that lies upon your breast, and even in heaven He is still called "the Holy Child, Jesus." Perhaps, above all else, the little child is accessible. It is not hard to get acquainted with a child, it is not difficult to approach a little child, and oh, how easy it is to go to Jesus, and how simple His welcome, how prompt His forgiveness, acceptance, and grace. Oh, doubting, troubled soul, you can find your Saviour as easily as you can reach the heart of a little child.

And, busy mother, worrying perhaps about what you consider higher duties, and envying your happy sister, who has leisure to attend religious meetings and work for public charities and Christian objects, while you are busy all day long with the nursery and household, and sometimes grow impatient of the little hands that hold so tightly to your apron-strings—if you would remember that your services to them are accepted by the Master as ministries to Him! They represent Him, and, in loving and caring for them, you are loving and caring for their Lord and yours. How beautifully this has been reflected in the old legend of St. Christopher, the knight that had long sought for the Master, whom he had

chosen to serve, and at last one night he went to sleep in a little cabin on the banks of a stormy river. Late in the night, above the howling tempest, he heard the wail of a suffering child. He flew to its rescue and saved it from drowning in the winter torrent, but, as he brought it to the shore and placed it on the solid ground, himself chilled and almost exhausted with the struggle, lo, the child was suddenly transfigured, and the Saviour stood before him instead of that rescued babe, His face all shining with light and His voice rewarding the services of the saint, and saying: "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, you did it unto Me! Henceforth your name shall be Christ bearer (Christopher)—one that bears the burdens of the Christ." Beloved, let us be more willing to be Christ bearers, and we will never be heard saying again, "My work is only to look after children!"

CAPACITY FOR FAITH.

5. The Capacity of a Little Child for Faith. "These little ones that believe in Me" (Matt. xviii. 6). He means that the little children can trust Him. They are not too young to know their Saviour. Earlier than you dream, their hearts can pray, believe, love and touch

that spiritual realm that is reached not by strong reasoning, but by childish instinct.

Some of the most eminent servants of Christ became His happy followers as early as the age of three, four and five years. Dr. Isaac Watts was writing hymns at the age of five years, and some of us have parted with our little ones much younger on the brink of the dark river, and they have told us with shining faces and child faith, that they knew they were going home to be with Jesus. Let us not chill them by our distrust. Let us not despise those little ones or think ignobly of them. They are very near to the Father, they are very dear to the Master, and they are not hard to bring to His blessed feet.

A STUMBLING BLOCK.

6. The Danger of Causing a Child to Stumble (Matt. xviii. 6). The word "offend" here literally means to cause to stumble. It is not easy to offend a little child, for it has too much sense to take offense; but it means to cause them to stumble, to do them spiritual harm, and the Lord Jesus tells us that, "It were better for us that a millstone were hung to our necks and we were cast into the depths of the sea," that that we should cause one of His little ones to

stumble. Oh, how many are guilty of this! Sometimes it is through false teaching, and the adversary is wise in teaching the pagan mother, the Roman Catholic sister, and the promoters of other false religions, to do their best work with the children, for they know a prejudice learned in infancy is never forgotten. Perhaps the most serious way in which we cause the little ones to stumble is by our wicked example. Oh, the fearful influences in which many an innocent child is brought up—a drunken father, a passionate mother, family brawls alternating with family revels, cursing, Sabbath breaking, immorality and a school of vice and crime, which cannot possibly fail to leave its transcript upon the plastic and receptive mind of even the purest child. Fathers and mothers, if any motive stronger than another could appeal to you to become Christians yourself, surely it would be this—to save your children from the curse that sin has brought to you. Oh, how shall God ever forgive you, and how shall you forgive yourselves if you lead astray those little souls that have put their trusting hands in yours and said, "I go with mother; I will do what father does"!

Sometimes, again, even without these aggravated conditions, there are nominally Christian

homes where the upbringing of childhood is sadly marred by lack of gentleness, tenderness and wisdom, the harsh word, the impatient rebuke, the quick and irritating blow, and then, perhaps, the foolish indulgence that tries to atone for it. The weakness of many a mother and father has crushed the sweetness out of childhood all too soon, and the bud that might have blossomed into a fair flower, has been crushed and changed into a thorn. That was what the apostle was thinking of when he wrote the touching verse, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That literally means, bring them up as God brings you up. Remember, every time you treat them harshly: "How would I like my Father to treat me thus?" "I am to you in the place of God," was the beautiful language of Joseph to his brothers. Oh, that we might be to them instead of God!

But, above all other crimes against the little ones, is the crime of neglecting their souls' salvation, and letting them go astray, when it is so easy to bring them to the Saviour. God save us from the blood of "the innocents," and the crime of causing the little ones to stumble.

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

7. Their Heavenly Guardianship. An extremely beautiful truth is suggested in the tenth verse: "I say unto you, the angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10). He means that the little ones have each a guardian angel, and that that angel has always access to the Father in heaven. Like that beautiful queen mother who always left word when called away by Court ceremonies, "Remember that I am always at leisure for a call from the nursery," so the Father in heaven, amid all the care of countless worlds, is never too busy to listen to the report of the heavenly guardians who watch His little children. They may go to Him at any moment, and call upon Him for any need.

CHRIST AND THE CHILDREN.

8. Their Shepherd and Their Saviour. But they have a higher friend than even the angels. For He says, "The Son of Man has come to save that which is lost" (Matt. xviii. 11), and then He gives a special edition of the parable of the Good Shepherd, meant exclusively for the little children. There is another edition of the parable in Luke xv. That

one is meant for the adults, but this one belongs entirely to the little ones. He tells how the shepherd goes to seek his lost one and how he brings it home, and then He expounds the parable in one brief sentence: "Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." There is a very beautiful omission in the eleventh verse. The same message occurs in the nineteenth chapter of Luke, when He was referring to the salvation of Zaccheus, the publican. The Lord there adds one word to the phrase, "The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost." Zaccheus, like us older sinners, needed to be sought as well as saved, but the little children come without effort, and He only needed to save them. Beautiful indeed was the comment of a little girl who was looking at a picture of the mothers of Jerusalem pushing their little children forward to the Saviour to receive His blessing, and as she watched the figures she turned to her mamma and said: "I don't like that; I'd go without pushing." This was the thought of Christ in this simple phrase.

The spirit of the disciples on this occasion was very offensive to Him. They had little sympathy with the crowd of mothers and children that were jostling the Saviour, and they

tried their best to keep them back, but the Saviour was much displeased. These conservative disciples represent too many in the church today with whom our Lord is quite as much displeased. We have good cause to thank God for the greatly improved methods of Sabbath School and juvenile Christian work, but none of these things can be substitutes for our individual love, sacrifice and service.

The act of the Lord Jesus in receiving these little children and publicly blessing them seems to suggest and authorize the beautiful custom which obtains in many churches of holding special dedicatory services for the little ones and offering them to God for His blessing. This was done in the case of our Lord Himself when a little child, and He seems to have repeated a similar service on this occasion in His earthly ministry and we cannot err in following His beautiful twofold example.

MARRIAGE.

II. The Christian Law of Marriage. The first part of the nineteenth chapter of Matthew is devoted to the discussion of the relation of marriage to the kingdom.

1. The Law of Creation. He tells us in the fourth verse that the primeval law of marriage

was the creation of one man for one woman and one woman for one man. The true reading here is, "He made them a male and a female." The law of creation made no provision for the vice of polygamy, but created an equal number of both sexes, and such has substantially been the case among all nations. Still further He goes on to tell us of the provision in nature itself and its instincts for the marriage relation and how it is the divine order "that a man should leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The element of personal affection and mutual attraction is clearly involved here. Marriage is not a conventional arrangement of convenience, but a cleavage of hearts so strong that it supersedes the previous attachment of father and mother to the extent at least of allowing a still closer union, the union which makes them truly one. Surely, it is needless to say that marriage without such unity and love is not a sacrament, but a sacrilege.

DIVORCE UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT.

2. The Law of Moses. He then takes up the Mosaic provision for divorce, and He ad-

mits that Moses did make liberal provision for divorce, but "from the beginning it was not so." Moses, He tells them, did this "because of the hardness of your hearts," that is to say, the age was not then prepared for the higher law of Christian marriage and God winked at certain provisions for the time, but His original conception of marriage and his ultimate law of marriage is the entering of one man and one woman in a heart fellowship of true affection as long as life itself.

DIVORCE UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT.

3. The Law of Christ. He then proceeds to lay down the Christian law concerning divorce. This is much more fully explained later by the Holy Spirit in the writings of the apostles, especially by St. Paul, in the seventh chapter of I. Corinthians. There the great apostle tells us that Christian marriage must involve not only natural affection, but spiritual oneness. The child of God must not marry the unconverted, but it must be 'only in the Lord." Without such unity, marriage is indeed a rash venture and a sure disaster. As Dr. Arnot has well expressed it, it is like two ships joined together about twenty feet apart and sailing on a long ocean voyage. If they were really so close as to be one, they

could breast the billows together and safely outride the storm, or if they were a hundred miles apart they would be safe, but so close they rasp and tear each other's side in every dash of the waves until at last they crush each other to destruction and go down together. Such is the picture of many an ill-mated marriage. The Lord Jesus does not take up this phase of it here, but He dwells on the side of divorce in the same terms as the apostle does in the chapter already referred to in Corinthians. There is provision for divorce under the law of Christ, but it is only on one condition, a breach of the marriage vows by literal unfaithfulness and immorality.

Then the innocent party has the right to divorce the guilty, and that carries with it the right of the innocent to re-marry, but the divorced one, the guilty one, has not this right of re-marriage, and such re-marriage is adultery, not only on the part of the divorcee, but also the partner of the new marriage. Christ makes no provision for minor grounds of divorce, and we should be very careful in upholding the sanctity of marriage and the strictness and righteousness of His holy law.

CELIBACY AND MARRIAGE.

4. The Law of Liberty. The Lord then

takes up the question of the rightness and wrongness of the unmarried state, and while He certainly does not place any premium on celibacy as the highest state of Christian life, yet He gives perfect freedom to those who choose the unmarried state to do so, and He leaves this as a matter of conscience for each one to settle with himself or herself. If, from our high allegiance to Christ and a desire to be more free to serve Him, we choose it "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," the Lord accepts our sacrifice and consecration, but He adds: "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." We shall find no sanction anywhere in the New Testament for the extreme and fanatical teachings of a class who are waging war on the lawful marriage as a less holy state. Like all extreme teachings, this will lead to great sin in the very direction in which it is seeking for greater purity. We shall always find that the path of service, holiness and highest service will be found in simple obedience to the gentle and highest commandments of that blessed Master, who put upon us no hard conditions, but has said: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Finally, let us remember that all human relationships are but stepping stones to our highest and divine relationship to Christ and heav-

en. The best of earthly marriages is but a little bit of broken glass full of the sunshine of heaven. God gives us these earthly ties as types of the heavenly that we may better understand the love of our divine Bridegroom, the tenderness of our heavenly Father and the meaning of our holy sonship.

Chapter XII.

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20).

UP to this point in the Gospel of Matthew the Lord Jesus had not referred to the church. He had frequently spoken of the kingdom of heaven, but the church is mentioned for the first time in Matthew xvi. 18: "Upon this rock will I build my church." And here again in the eighteenth chapter he refers more particularly to the authority and discipline of the church.

This naturally suggests the question, What is the difference between the Kingdom and the Church? The *kingdom* is the larger term denoting the whole revelation of God's plan during the Christian age up to the coming of the Lord and including His advent and reign. The *church* is a narrower term, denoting the body of believers called out from the world and united to Him as their Head and whom He is preparing for the high destiny of His bride.

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

The Greek word for church, *ekklesia,* literally means *called out.* The primary idea of the word is separation. As you will note in the New Testament, this word seems to have two distinct applications. First, it denotes a particular congregation of believers in one place, as for example, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Samaria, the church in Antioch. Secondly, it also denotes the whole body of believers, and is so used when it is said "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it," and other similar passages. It is never used to denote a Christian Denomination, as the Baptist, the Methodist, the Presbyterian Church. That is a purely human application of the term. While the Lord's forbearance graciously tolerates our sectarian divisions, they have no warrant whatever in the Holy Scriptures. It is not worth our while to quarrel with them, as the Lord's coming will soon end these sad divisions in the blessed re-union of the children of God in the "general assembly and Church of the first born;" but all the same, it is well for us to understand the true meaning and limitations of the words used to describe the church of Christ.

These two passages in the sixteenth and

eighteenth chapters of Matthew contain much important teaching respecting the church of Christ:

FOUNDED BY CHRIST.

I. The Founding of the Church. This takes us back to the eighteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew: "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is needless to say that this passage has given occasion for centuries of theological controversy. Long before the days of the Papacy, however, the Christian Fathers, like Jerome and Augustine, had suggested the interpretation which we venture to give, and which leaves no ground whatever for the primacy of Peter as the head of the church on earth. Even the least learned reader of the English Bible can easily see that any power and authority given to Peter in this verse was equally given to the other disciples in the eighteenth chapter, where He says of all of them: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

But turning to the passage itself, we find a very delicate and striking distinction in the two words. Petros signifies a stone, Peter a

rock; that is the bed-rock from which the stone is cut. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ says: "Thou art Petros, the stone, and upon this Petra, the bedrock from which this little stone has been cut, I will build my Church." No mason would think of building a lofty and stable edifice on a shifting stone; it is the solid rock that he seeks for a foundation. Peter is the stone, but Christ Himself is the rock; and as some of the Fathers very wisely suggested, in saying this, the Lord Jesus must have pointed to Himself in distinction from Peter.

This distinction gives a very fine meaning to the passage. Peter himself, in his own epistle, carries out the same idea with great beauty, "Unto whom coming as unto a Living Stone; ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. Here we have the separate stones and individual saints and the great foundation Stone, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Very distinctly does the apostle Paul also refer to this when he says: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Christ, therefore, is the true foundation of the Church, and only as we are united to Him do we belong to the true Church. It is not our theology, our profession, our baptism, or our confirmation that makes us members of

His Church, but our vital union with Him, our Living Head.

But not only is He the founder; He is also the builder of the Church. "On this rock will I build My Church." Only the Holy Spirit can truly attach souls to this Living Head. All other work is called by the apostle "wood, hay and stubble," and will perish amid the awful tests of the last day. In the account of the church at Pentecost it is finely said, "The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved;" and in the same connection it is added a little later in the same book of Acts: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CHURCH.

II. The Constitution of the Church. This is finely expressed in the text which we have quoted above. "Where two or three are gathered togther in My name, there am I in the midst of them." It is this which constitutes the Christian Church, a company of true believers gathered together, not in, but unto, the name of the Lord. It is not unto the name of some human leader or sect, but the name of the Lord; He is the true Head and front of His own Church, and even a little company of true believers thus gathered unto His name really

constitute the New Testament Church, although there may be neither bishop nor presbytery nor high authority, nor long tradition, nor illustrious human names. Where there are even two or three so gathered unto His name, there is always one more.

The expression, "there am I in the midst," denotes much more than the spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus in the hearts of individual believers. That is always true, but this is something quite different. It is the Lord Jesus "in the midst," as well as in the heart; it is the presence of the Head of the Church, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Glorious One, who is "Head over all things for His body and the Church." And He is in the midst not only by His Holy Spirit, but in His providence, in His power and with all the authority of His kingly rights as the Son of God and Mediatorial Lord and King. He is in the midst, as He was at the Red Sea, at the Jordan, and on the day of Pentecost. He is in the midst to clothe with His authority, to anoint with His Spirit, to defend by His power and to sanction with His name that which is done in that name and for His glory.

What a dignity it confers upon the humblest Christian assembly, and what a simplicity it gives to our equipment in the great work of

evangelizing the world for Christ. We do not need to wait for ecclesiastical dignitaries or depend upon human forms and ceremonies, but in the heart of heathendom a little flock may meet in the Master's name and know that its acts and ordinances are as sacred and effective as though they were done in the most venerable cathedral or the most imposing ecclesiastical council.

ITS DISCIPLINE.

III. The Discipline of the Church. The Lord Jesus has provided for the government and purity of His Church, and He has given authority to His servants to remove from this fellowship everything in opposition with its holy character. He has invested this discipline with the most sacred and binding authority, and He tells us in this passage that what we bind on earth He will bind in heaven, and what we loose on earth He will loose in heaven. When the wilful and disobedient disciple refuses to yield to loving admonition and persists in some sinful and un-Christian course, the Master has given to His people the right and power to remove that member and hand him over to the divine chastening until he shall truly repent and He tells us here that such an act on the part of the Church of God will

be followed by the Lord's effectual dealing with all such cases. It will not be merely a matter of outward excommunication or public censure, but God's hand will deal with the offender through temporal judgment with a view to bringing the guilty one to repentance, or, as the apostle expressed it in another place, "for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ."

But He tells us that discipline must be the last resort and not the first. Therefore He says: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone" (Matt. xviii. 15-17). There is to be personal dealing first, tender, loving admonition and appeal; but if this fails, then He says: "Take with thee one or two others that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Then, if this united appeal should fail, "tell it to the Church," and "if he neglect the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and publican."

Here we learn that our Christian attitude with the erring brother is always to deal with him personally and alone. We have no right to speak even to another of our brother's faults and offenses, until we have first dealt with him ourselves in loving faithfulness. It is only when this course has failed that we are per-

mitted to resort to more rigid discipline. The Lord Jesus has made this the law of the Christian church. Oh, how better it would be if His people would really live up to it! What a certain preventive it would be to the slander, the evil speaking, the strife and often the falling away of brethren who might have been saved by true obedience to the loving and wise commandment of the Master. Shall we take His message to us, here and henceforth thus deal with our erring brethren and prove to the world that the resources of the Church of Jesus Christ are adequate for her preservation, purity and power?

THE SPIRIT.

IV. The Spirit of Love and Forgiveness. The Lord Jesus proceeds from this point to unfold to His disciples the law of love in the form of a striking parable, "the Unmerciful Servant" (Matt. xviii. 23-35). The design of this parable is to show the estimation in which the Lord holds the spirit of charity and forgiveness and His indignation against all uncharitableness, censoriousness and harsh judging among brethren. The two unpardonable sins of the New Testament are unbelief in Christ and unlovingness toward our brethren, and we cannot claim forgiveness of the Lord

unless we are equally forgiving one to the other. Even the infidel, Gibbon, was forced to admit that one chief secret of the extraordinary success of the early Church, notwithstanding the severest persecutions, was the mutual love of the brethren, a spectacle wholly new to the world and an armor that will ever prove invincible against human criticism and Satanic hate. A church without love would be as great a contradiction as a home without affection or a Heaven without God.

UNITED PRAYER.

V. The Fellowship of the Church. The fellowship of prayer is next referred to as the real source of power in the Christian church. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (verse 19). This is the real purpose of the union of Christian hearts in the Church of God. It is to bring them together in the fellowship of divine prayer. There is an added power in the element of union; there is something in the prayer of two harmonious hearts that does not seem to be promised even to the prayer of one. But they must be in unison. The word "agree" in the Greek is *"symphonie;"* it is a phrase which

denotes a musical chord, and is the most perfect expression of harmony. It is more than unison; it is the unison of different notes; it is an accord of hearts that are individually distinct yet spiritually one. Only the Holy Spirit can produce such harmony. He is the true author of prayer, and He does it by laying it upon different hearts that they shall be truly one.

In the fine picture given us in the Book of Zechariah of the church of Christ in the image of the seven lamps in the temple, we have this figure of the two golden pipes conveying oil from the living olive trees to the bowl of the lamp. That was the one feature of the symbol that impressed the prophet as he gazed upon the vision. "What are those two golden pipes," he asked, "that bring the oil into the lamps?" and the answer was: "Those are two anointed ones that stand before the God of the whole earth." Literally these are the "two sons of oil." This surely represents the unity of prayer on the part of God's children. It would seem as if the Lord had required such unity as essential to effective prayer. Perhaps we shall some day find that no blessing ever reaches us from the throne which does not come through some one's prayer, and thus gives occasion for

the name of Jesus Christ to be honored and glorified before all heaven.

In the story of the early church we have some remarkable instances of the power of united prayer. We are told how, after an outbreak of bitter persecution, they went unto their own company and unitedly called upon God, and it is added: "When they prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." This was in direct answer to a service of united prayer.

We read again in the twelfth chapter of Acts a similar instance. The apostle Peter was held in prison, caged like an animal, to be brought out on the great festival of Easter and publicly butchered before the crowd to make a more distinguished holiday, and the simple but eloquent verse is added: "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." We know what followed; not only the miraculous deliverance of Peter, but soon after the fearful death of Herod, his persecutor; and the chapter ends with the remarkable but brief record, "But the Word of God grew

and multiplied." This has ever been and will ever be the secret of the church's power.

Dr. Torrey declares that the secret of the remarkable religious revival now in Great Britain is due to the fact that a few years ago some Christian friends in Chicago began to pray in unison and faith that God would bring about a religious revival throughout the world. They continued their prayer from month to month and are continuing it still. It was not long until God's working began to appear. A deputation from Australia waited on Dr. Torrey in Chicago and invited him to visit that colony and conduct a series of evangelistic services. The result of those meetings was a remarkable religious awakening that spread over the whole of Australia and has been followed by similar meetings in other places. The records of answered prayer are full of similar instances, perhaps on a smaller scale, but not less encouraging to faith and prayer. This is the mightiest equipment of the Church of God, this is the highest ministry of the people of God.

Shall we prove its power as never before? "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence and give Him no rest until He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Chapter XIII.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY KINGDOM.

"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whomsoever will be great among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25-28).

THIS is a picture of the spirit of the earthly and heavenly kingdom. The watchword of the former is "look out for yourself," "get all you can," "make the best of life," "take care of yourself," and many phrases of similar import and familiar colloquial meaning. The spirit of the heavenly kingdom is "love seeketh not her own," "deny thyself," "live for others and for God," "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

The various paragraphs from Matthew xix. to xxviii., contain a series of illustrations of this contrast:

SELFISHNESS.

I. Selfishness is the Essential Principle of Sin. This is very finely illustrated in the incident of the one who came to Him asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. xix. 16.) In answering him, the Lord Jesus paused a moment to show him that the word "good" could be applied to none but God: "If I am good I must be God, for no human being can claim that title." This must have been a rude shock to this young man's self-confidence, for he felt quite certain that he at least was good.

Then the Master proceeds to show him his own heart and convict him of his utter selfishness. He does this by meeting him first on his own plane and assuming that, according to the law of righteousness, if he is really good he will inherit eternal life as a matter of simple justice and righteousness. Therefore He answers: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (vs. 17). "Which?" replies the young man. The Lord then quotes the second table of the law covering our duties to our neighbor, all summed up in one closing command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is familiar ground

to the young man, and he confidently declares: "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" Then the Lord presses the keen edge of the sword of truth into his hypocrisy that had so long deceived him. It was as if he had said, "You think you have obeyed the second table of the law and loved your neighbor as yourself, for that is the real spirit of the law. Well, I am going to apply a simply test. If you love your neighbor as yourself, it will not be difficult for you to share with him your wealth; and if you love the Lord with all your heart, it will be no sacrifice to you to give up all and follow Him. Therefore, as a simple test of your love to your neighbor and your love to God, "Go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me." And lo, that young man's castle of self-righteousness crumbled into dust. In a moment he saw himself in his true selfishness. The very thought of parting with his wealth and becoming a humble, despised follower of the Son of God filled him with sorrow and despair. He could not make such a sacrifice. He did not love his brother or his God. He loved himself and his own wealth and comfort, and he was unwilling to give these up

for any higher plane. Alas! the illusion was gone, his dream of righteousness and eternal life melted into air, and he went away sorrowful for the strangest reason in the world—because he had great possessions (Matt. xix. 18-22). Most people are sorrowful because they have so little; but he found the cause of his deepest sorrow in the fact that he was unwilling and unable to part with his earthly treasures for the sake of his neighbor and his God. He had committed no act of gross immorality or open sin; he was not in any sense a bad man as the world understands it, and yet he saw himself to be utterly selfish, and bound to earth and its pleasures and aims by bonds that he was utterly unable to break. And so when the light of God comes into the soul we find that sin does not consist so much in gross crimes against the laws of man, or even the laws of God, as in the subtle spirit of self-love. Therefore it comes to pass that the self-righteous and moral sinners are much harder to reach than the profligate and the drunkard; and the Lord Jesus had to say to the religious Pharisees of His own time, "Publicans and harlots shall get into the kingdom of heaven before you."

It is said that a celebrated Rationalist preacher of France was once invited by an

Evangelical Minister to preach in his pulpit on the text, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc., and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; on these two hang all the law and the prophets." While standing in the pulpit introducing his sermon, his brother minister, who was an earnest and spiritually-minded man, was praying to God for the salvation of his soul. In answer to his prayer the strangest thing came to pass. The Rationalist preacher became suddenly convicted of sin while trying to preach on this subject. The Spirit of God showed to him that the one thing that even the Hebrew law demanded of all men was perfect love to man; and there and then he saw that he was destitute of this love, and, filled with alarm and despair by the view he got of his own heart, he stopped in his sermon, and with tears of earnestness besought the congregation to pray for him that he might seek and find through Jesus Christ that grace that alone could enable him to have this love of which his own unnatural heart was utterly destitute.

Dear friend, have you become convicted of the spirit of selfishness, the love of your own self, your own reputation, your own ease and pleasure, even your own religious merit and

righteousness? This is the essence of human depravity, and in this begins the very first stepping of the work of grace and salvation. The Lord Jesus takes occasion, after the departure of this young man, to say, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God" (Matt. xviii. 24). The eye of the needle to which He here referred was a certain gate in Jerusalem which was so low that a loaded camel could not pass through it. It had to unload its burden and kneel before it could pass the gate of the needle's eye. What a striking figure of the necessity of our unloading our earthly treasures and self-righteousness before we can enter into the heavenly kingdom.

The disciples are amazed at His strong language, and ask in sorrow, "Who, then, can be saved?" (Matt. xviii. 25) and the Lord replies, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. xviii. 26). Nothing but a miracle of grace and power can bring the proud, self-satisfied human heart to see its emptiness, to part with its idols, and to pass on its knees through the narrow gate that leads to life.

SELF-SACRIFICE.

II. The Measure of our Eternal Reward is Determined by the Spirit of Self-sacrifice. "Behold," says Peter, "we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have, therefore?" And Jesus said unto them: "Verily I say unto you that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. xviii. 26-30).

The word "Regeneration" here is in the Greek *"Palingenesis,"* which means the new creation. It describes the coming age when the Lord Jesus will return and set up His Kingdom. Then He tells His disciples the rewards of that kingdom will be determined by the sacrifices of His servants. It is not so much what we have done as the spirit of love and sacrifice that has prompted our deeds and sufferings. But in the closing sentence which immediately follows, "Many that

are first shall be last and the last shall be first," the Lord implies that there will be much surprise and disappointment when the testing time shall reveal the real spirit of every heart; and many that have seemed to be truly unselfish may find, to their eternal disappointment, that even their seeming sacrifices were prompted after all by some form of selfishness, even if it is sometimes religious selfishness.

There is a very solemn story told by Dr. Bonar of a dream in which he saw his own heart analyzed in the presence of God by a holy angel, who dissolved it in a crucible and took each separate element and weighed it, and when all was over the good minister looked with horror as he saw that almost all the masses of elements into which his spirit had been resolved consisted of mere earthly motives, love of applause, love of intellectual work, mere habit or tradition, and a thousand other things, and there was but a trace of true divine love. He woke from his dream to humble himself before God and pray with deep earnestness: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

FUTURE REWARDS.

III. The Highest Recompenses in the Heavenly Kingdom will be Given to Those Who Serve not for Reward, but for Love. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. xx. 1-16) unfolds some deep principles in connection with the subject of reward. First, let us closely understand the difference between free grace and reward. Salvation is the gift of God's free grace; but after we are saved our services for Christ are rewarded according to the measure of our sacrifices and love. We cannot obtain the entrance into the kingdom of heaven by our own good works; this is bestowed upon the sinner freely for Christ's sake. But having entered the kingdom, we are all competitors for various prizes which are bestowed on the principle of service and love.

These rewards are various. It does not look like this at first, as we study the parable for each of the laborers seems to receive the same amount, a penny a day. But when we look more closely into the matter we find that the first laborers worked twelve hours for their penny and the last only one hour for the same sum, so that they really received twelve times as much pro rata as the others.

The picture is a very graphic one. The Master comes to His vineyard in the morning at six o'clock and finds a lot of idle men around. He engages a number of laborers under a special contract at a penny a day, equal to about 15 cents in our money. This would be fair wages in the East today. Later, at nine o'clock, and again at noon, and again at three o'clock in the afternoon He went to the vineyard and found others standing idle and He sent them to work, but on a different contract. There was no stipulation of a penny a day, but simply the promise, "Whatsoever is right, I will give you." It was work for wages, but there was a degree of trust about it. But at five o'clock when the day was almost gone and only one hour was left for work, He found still others standing idle, and He sent them into the vineyard to work, but said nothing to them about wages. The reading in our old version of verse 7 is wrong. The revised version has given it correctly by leaving out the clause about wages. He simply sent these men to work without any promise or agreement whatever. When the evening came and all received their wages, these last laborers received the same as the men that had toiled all day long, practically twelve times as much as the first workmen.

When we come to inquire into the reason of this, we cannot forget that these last laborers worked in simple faith without any agreement at all, while the other labored under a law and contract. Truly, this represents the highest spirit of service, "all for love and nothing for reward." The first represents work done under the law; the second, perhaps, for that class of Christians that try to get through as cheaply as possible; the third for those who go purely under the principle of grace, who give their lives to God in simple faith and trust Him for everything. Their reward will be the largest of all. It is quite possible for us to be working for a reward rather than for the Master with love, and this form of selfishness, even though it be spiritual selfishness, will vitiate much of our best service. How beautiful is the picture in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew of the persons whom the Master praised for their ministries to Him: "I was hungry and ye gave Me food, I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink, I was sick and in prison and ye visited Me," and they were quite surprised and had forgotten all about it, and answered simply, "When saw we Thee hungry or thirsty and fed Thee or gave Thee drink," etc. The very unconsciousness of their own merit was their

highest merit and the Lord rewarded them all the same, adding with supreme beauty: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 40).

FELLOWSHIP IN HIS SUFFERINGS.

IV. The Prizes of the Kingdom are Given for Fellowship in the Sufferings of Christ. It was in this connection that the mother of James and John came to the Master with her two boys and made a special request for them, that they might sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. The answer of Jesus was very striking; He did not refuse the honor requested, but He told them that it was to be bestowed not arbitrarily, but on special grounds. The correct reading here is very expressive: "to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, except to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." He does not say that there is no such reward, but He says it is prepared for certain persons and will be only given to those who meet the demands. And then He tells them what these conditions are: "Can ye drink of My cup, can ye be baptized with My baptism?" The cup was His cup of sorrow, the baptism was His baptism of death, and He meant that only by their

partnership of suffering and death could they enter into the fulness of His glory (Matt. xx. 23).

This is what the apostle Paul must have meant when he said in one of his epistles that there was no glory in preaching the gospel, for that was simply duty, but there was some glory in preaching the gospel "without charge," and in meeting gladly the sacrifices and sufferings which made him a spectacle and a gazing stock to the world and a follower of his suffering Lord in the path of danger and death. The words that followed Matthew xx. 25-28, and which we have quoted above as our text, sum up the whole discussion in the strongest and most forcible language and draw a picture with vivid lines of contrast between the spirit of human ambition and Christian self-sacrifice. "Greatness in the world," he says, "consists of lording it over others, greatness in the heavenly kingdom consists in serving others and sacrificing for Him."

Two words are here employed to describe Christian service; the one is the Greek word *Diakonos,* which denotes ministry, or service, for others; the second is the word *Doulos,* which means a slave. It is not merely service for others, but it is humiliating service. He

says, "He that would be great, let him be your Diakonos, but he that would be supremely great, the chief among you, let him be your Doulos, your slave. This, he says, is the ministry of the Son of Man who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister even to give His life a ransom for many," and the treasured servant will approach most nearly to the steps of his patron and Lord.

There are ministries which God appoints for us which require not only to serve our brethren, but even to suffer indignity, humiliation and the most trying provocation at their hands. There are men and women whose lives are spent enduring the weakness, selfishness, the petty annoyances and overbearing unkindnesses and exactions and misunderstandings that come from selfish lives with whom they are called to stand in constant forbearance and loving patient service. O, suffering children of God, do not think your lives wasted in such trying ministries; you are following in the footsteps of the Son of Man, you are not only a minister for Him, but a slave too for His sake, and the time is coming when your exaltation yonder will be in proportion to the depths of your abasement here. These are the ministries that are forging your eternal crowns, and some day,

the tear drops and the blood drops will be transformed into diamonds and rubies of surpassing glory in the recompenses of the coming age.

Even human history is glorified by just such flashes of earthly heroism. The story is told far and wide of that young girl of fourteen in the fearful Chicago fire who risked her life to keep open the door of a fire-escape in that burning theater until her little body was blistered almost to a cinder, and yet she bravely stood there until she had saved half a hundred perishing men and women.

The courageous little nation that is now facing the horrors of a terrific war with the mightiest empire on the globe, the Japanese, glory in these memorials of patriotic sacrifice. In the late war with China when the gate of Port Arthur could not be forced open, a common soldier in the army of Japan rushed up with a dynamite bomb in his hand and dashed it against the gates, and in the awful explosion that followed he himself was torn to a thousand fragments, but that barrier was also pressed asunder and the soldiers of his country marched through to victory, and this was his sufficient reward.

At another time one of the young officers learned that the harbor of Port Arthur was

closed against the fleet of Japan by a boom that crossed its mouth and which it was impossible to break through. He went to the commanding officer and explained to him that he had invented a device by which he could destroy that boom, but that he was not at liberty to explain the secret, but only asked permission to carry it out. This was given him, and with a little company of marines he stole up at night within one hundred yards of the boom and then in a little shell slipped up alone with soft paddles until near enough to fasten a bomb to that great barrier and explode it. Again in the explosion which followed a human being was sacrificed and little pieces of his uniform and his body were picked up as they were scattered far and wide, but the harbor was opened and the navy of Japan stole in and captured the ships of China. A few months afterward the fragments of his mutilated body were buried in state in the presence of the Mikado of Japan, and it is said that the father of this brave young soldier, with his face shining with joy, was called to lead the funeral procession in the presence of his emperor, and for the first time in the history of Japan a subject walked in front of the ruler in that procession of honor.

It was a deed of sacrifice that had raised a common soldier higher than all the rank that a throne could give.

And so the time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall call His humble servants and His self-sacrificing followers and before assembled worlds shall place the crown upon their head and gird Himself and go forth to serve them.

God help us, like Him, for the joy set before us to "endure the cross, despising the shame," and not miss the opportunities so swiftly passing away for winning unfading crowns of glory.

Chapter XIV.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE KING

"Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold the King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass" (Matt. xxi. 5).

THE time had now come when the Lord Jesus was to be publicly manifested as the son of David and the King of Israel. Hitherto He had refused the demands of the multitude, who, after His Galilean miracles, had tried "to take Him by force and make Him a king;" but now as the end draws near, it is proper that He should literally fulfill the announcements of ancient prophecy, and for a brief moment, at least, appear as the heir to David's throne and the answer to all the Messianic hopes of Israel.

THE BLIND MEN.

I. The Recognition of the King. It was strange that the first to recognize Him as Israel's King should be two blind beggars. That which the rulers of Israel, with all their wisdom, failed to comprehend, was discovered by poor old Bartimeus and his blind companion.

Calling Him by His Messianic name, they cried, as the procession pressed by, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" When Jesus heard that name, He instantly ordered the procession to halt, and, calling them to Him, granted their petition like a king, bidding them receive their sight and follow Him in the way.

So still it is ever true, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25). The wisdom of the world and even the culture of theological science have blinded men to the vision of God, and it is the lowly and often illiterate to whom the Holy Ghost reveals "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" and the blessed hope of the coming once more of our glorious King.

How did these blind men know that Jesus was the Son of David? With their inner senses they felt after Him until they found Him. It is so still that the hungry heart finds the Saviour. Reaching out in our darkness and sense of need, groping for One who we feel can meet and satisfy our need, we press our way toward the light even as the blind man who, while he cannot discern the objects before him, can see vaguely at least the glare of the light and press closer to it. Even so we can press toward God, and He will meet the

seeking soul and reveal Himself in the vision of light and love even as He did to them.

Seeker for Christ, follow the light you have and He will give more as you follow on, and you, too, will hear Him say, "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole."

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

II. The Manifestation of the King. Ancient prophecy had foretold the coming of the King of meekness, truth and love, and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a striking fulfillment. Zechariah especially had literally described the scenes portrayed in this chapter. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah ix. 9).

For the first time in His earthly ministry, our Lord permits Himself to be borne by the beast of burden, which had always been recognized as the bearer of kings. Riding upon a little colt never ridden before, draped with the garments of His disciples as they walked beside, and accompanied by the mighty multitude surging up from the city at this, the Passover time, when the population of Jerusalem was multiplied tenfold, he slowly descended from

Bethany toward the city. At every step the enthusiasm of the crowd grew higher. Cutting down branches from the palm trees, they strewed them in the way, and even their garments they flung in homage at His feet, while their voices rose to a mighty shout as they cried in the language of an old prophetic psalm, "Hosannah to the Son of David, Hosannah in the highest" (Matt. xxi. 9).

But His own demeanor was in strange contrast to all these scenes of tumultuous excitement. Truly, He came as the King of meekness, lowliness and love. This became still more apparent when the city suddenly burst upon their view, and the sight of it drew from Him an outburst of sorrow and compassion, and amid all that pageant of popular acclamation He gave way to bitter tears and lamentations over the certain doom which He saw impending upon the scenes that lay spread before Him in all their glorious beauty. But the procession swept on, and in a little while He entered the city and the temple.

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the foreshadowing of that glorious time when He shall come again as Israel's long expected Messiah and take His place upon the throne of David, never again to leave it.

It is also typical of His entrance upon the

throne of the individual heart when we receive Him as our Lord and King. The little foal on whom no man had sat before, is the exquisite type of the heart that gives Him its exclusive affection. He comes to reign, not as tyrant, but as a King of gentleness and love in all the attractive attributes so finely set forth in the ancient picture that we are considering. He does not come to repress, but to satisfy. He does not dominate us as a despot, but He meets all the needs and longings of our being, and so blends with our nature and our will that we become His willing subjects and the very partners of His kingdom and His throne. Have we thus received Him and known Him as our King?

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

III. The King of Zion and the Lord of the Temple. Immediately upon entering the city, He passed through the gates of the temple and repeated the miracle of its cleansing which had formed the first chapter of His early Judean ministry. The difference between this miracle and the former, is that then He called it His Father's house; now "My house." He was now taking the position of being Himself the Lord of the temple and the true theocratic Head of the kingdom. A little later the phrase

was changed again. As He left that temple after His solemn warnings and judgments pronounced against the false rulers and leaders of Israel, he declared "Your house," Mine no longer, "your house is left unto you desolate and ye shall not see Me again until ye shall say blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 38, 39).

The cleansing of the temple was occasioned by the abuse which was made of its courts by a class of money brokers and cheap traders who took advantage of the people's desire for silver change in order to pay the half shekel offering which was required of every one entering the temple; and out of this there grew up a regular business and a large class of men who, at exorbitant rates of usury, supplied the silver exchange to the worshippers as they crowded into the courts without having provided themselves with the requisite coin.

Another class of tradesmen in like manner filled up another part of the court with their filthy stalls for the supply of doves and other animals for the sin offerings and burnt offerings of the daily sacrifices. These also were sold at exorbitant prices for the convenience of the worshippers, but really for the gain of the dealers.

As our Lord looked upon this unseemly

spectacle in the house of God, His indignation was aroused, and, taking a whip of small cords, He drove them out, overturning the tables, ordering the dove cotes immediately removed, and driving them before Him under such a spell of fear that they forgot everything but the means of escape from His holy wrath (Matt. xxi. 12). This act was a final assumption on His part of the highest authority, not only in, but even above the temple and its worship.

The same high place He still claims in the church of God and the individual heart. The abuses of the temple courts of old have, alas, been more than paralleled in the history of Christendom. It was the sale of Indulgences in the time of Luther for the enrichment of the ecclesiastical parties that brought about the Reformation.

The kind of sin here described is not secular business in its own place, but the doing of things in the name of religion which are prompted by mercenary motives. The preaching of the gospel for the sake of gain, wrong financial methods in supporting the church, the desecrating of the house of God by social and secular entertainments and methods of raising money which appeal to the selfishness and frivolity of man, and the using of Chris-

tianity in any way as a cloak of covetousness, as an advertisement of business, as a means of social preferment or secular gain—these are things which are so common on every side of us, that the hearts of many of God's children have been filled with humiliation and sorrow, and moved to earnest prayer for the coming of the King once more to cleanse His temple and purge from His church these shameful profanations.

The second cleansing of the temple would seem to suggest that before the Lord's coming, there is to be a profound work of sanctification among the people of God answering to that first cleansing of which we read so fully in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

Still more truly does it apply to the individual experience of the Christian. Here, too, there is a second cleansing which the Lord comes to bring when He Himself enters the consecrated heart, not only saving, but sanctifying and separating us unto Himself in a deeper sense than we can possibly know, even in the early joy of conversion. Have we received this second cleansing?

HOSANNAS OF THE CHILDREN.

IV. The Children's King. This was not an

ordinary crowd where the children always love to be in the front, but it was a genuine outburst of heaven inspired love and loyalty that made them cry, "Hosannah in the highest." For the Lord Jesus Himself bore testimony to the genuineness of their praise and indeed gave it the highest place over all others as He quoted the ancient scripture, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise" (Matt. xxi. 16). Others might join in the acclamations because of the contagious influence of an excited multitude, but theirs was "perfect praise." As usual, the Pharisees were ready to scorn their juvenile enthusiasm, but the Lord Jesus was also ready to vindicate them as He had once before.

Let us never forget that Jesus is the children's King. Bye and bye, when we welcome Him to His heavenly throne, we shall find that a vast proportion of that ransomed crowd will consist of little children. Let us train our little ones to know Him and crown Him as their King. The word used here in their childish praise is the Hebrew word "Hosannah." It is not quite the same as Hallelujah, the usual expression for worship and praise. Literally, it means "Lord save us." Our Hallelujahs must begin in Hosannahs. Even the children, too, must learn that they are sinful children, and

that they also require His cleansing blood, and only as they accept it and honor it will their Hosannahs become Hallelujahs, and the Lord pronounce their homage "perfect praise."

MIRACLES OF HEALING.

V. The Blessing of the King. Immediately after Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the temple, we read these significant words, "and the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them" (Matt. xxi. 14). Purification always leads on to power. The cleansing of the temple was followed by the healing of the sick and the revelation of the great and good Physician. So, still, it will be found in our personal experience. This was not a momentary gleam of divine beneficence over a dark and suffering world, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

"And warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He;
And love has still its Olivet,
And faith its Galilee.
The healing of His seamless robe
Is by our beds of pain,
We touch Him 'mid life's pain and strife,
And we are whole again."

But, of course, all this awaits its perfect fulfillment in that happier time when the King

shall come to His own again, "and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. xxxv. 10).

Then, when this earth is purged of all iniquity, will it be also true the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa. xxxiii. 24).

"Come, Lord, and take away
The sin, the wrong, the pain,
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again."

THE FRUITLESS FIG TREE.

VI. The Curse of the King. But the King has not only blessing, but also judgment recorded in His mighty hand. The only miracle of judgment recorded in all the life of Jesus Christ immediately followed these incidents. It was the cursing of the barren fig tree, to which He came seeking fruit and encouraged to expect it by the luxuriant leaves that covered its branches; but lo! there was "nothing but leaves," and He pronounced upon it the withering words that left it leafless and dead.

This was, of course, a type of the fruitless

nation that He had already referred to under the parable of the Barren Fig Tree, and it forecasts the solemn judgment that awaits every professed follower of Christ who shall meet Him at last with empty hands and fruitless life. But there is a beneficent aspect, even in the curse of the King. It tells us of One that has power to consume and destroy the things which we are unable to cast out of our lives. There are fig trees of sinful habit and physical disease which our human strength cannot throw off alone. Oh! how glad we are sometimes to have a God who is "a consuming fire" and from whose presence Satan, sin and sickness flee away. He tells us we may enter into His destructive power against these things and hand over to His flaming sword adversaries and obstacles too great for us to overcome. "I am so glad," said a little child once, "that I have a God that can shake the world." Our Christ is not all soft and easy benevolence. Back of His gentleness is an arm of might and a holiness as inexorable as the lightnings of the sky. Oh! sinner, whatever else you dare, beware of "the wrath of the Lamb."

THE FAITH OF GOD.

VII. The Sceptre of the Kingdom. In the closing verses of our lesson, chapter xxi, verses

20 to 22, the Lord reveals the secret of His own power and tells the disciples how they may share it also. The secret of it is faith. "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And so He passes over to us His very sceptre, and tells us that we may exercise the same omnipotence of faith through which He wrought His mighty works. It was by faith that He overcame and became for us "the Author and Finisher of our faith." But we may exercise the same faith, too. Some time in that coming kingdom we shall be like Him and exercise a power over the universe of God at which, could we fully realize it now, we would be amazed and appalled. But He is training us now in the use of this mystic sceptre, and teaching us the lessons of that faith of which He once said, "All things are possible with God, all things are possible unto him that believeth."

We have but touched its borderland, beloved. There are great continents of faith and power and prayer for us yet to explore. "Lord, teach us to pray," help our unbelief and give us "the faith of God."

Chapter XV.

THE KING IN CONFLICT WITH HIS ENEMIES.

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isa. xi. 2-4).

THIS prophetic picture of the Messiah finds a striking and marvelous illustration in the series of incidents that will form the subject of this chapter, revealing the Lord Jesus as the One "greater than Solomon" and as "the Wonderful Counsellor," as well as "the mighty God."

Hitherto we have seen the triumphs of the Lord Jesus in His miracles of power. We are now to see a series of miracles of wisdom not less wonderful than His victories of might.

We have already noticed the account of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His public recognition as the Son of David, the King of Israel and the Lord of the Temple. This occurred on the day corresponding to our Sunday, which was the day immediately following the Jewish Sabbath. On the following Monday He again visited Jerusalem from Bethany and spent the day in teaching and preaching in the temple. The incidents of the present chapter occurred on the next day, which would correspond to our Tuesday. Returning to the city from Bethany early in the morning of that day He had resumed His teaching and preaching in the presence of the multitude, when His enemies began a battle royal against Him with the evident purpose of ensnaring Him in some hasty word and affording a basis for accusing Him before the Roman governor. Their plans were adroitly laid on the story of their attack and defeat is one of the most thrilling dramas of all literature, sacred or profane.

THE PHARISEES.

I. Questioning His Authority.

The conflict begins by the Sanhedrin sending an official deputation to Him to demand His authority for the audacious things that

He was daring to do and say (Matt. xxi. 23). The Lord tactfully answered them by propounding another question to them and promising, as soon as they answered it, that He would tell them by what authority He was acting. "The baptism of John," He asks, "was it from heaven or of men?" (Matt. xxi. 25). He had a perfect right to ask this question because as the great national Council they had sent three years before to John a deputation to ask him, "Who art thou? Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?" It was only natural and right that the people should know the result of their inquiry.

Immediately the deputation found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they answered in the affirmative, very naturally Christ would ask, "Why, then, did ye not believe him when he testified of Me?" but if they went so far as to deny John's prophetic character, they would array the multitude against themselves, for all counted John a prophet. They were, therefore, driven to say, "We cannot tell," and, of course, the Lord replied, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. xxi. 27).

There are times when we, like the Master, are justified in avoiding or evading the foolish

questions of the enemies of the truth. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Servants of Christ should exercise the profound wisdom of their Master and claim it from Him for similar emergencies that will ever meet us in our life and work. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

The Lord followed the repulse of the Pharisees with three parables addressed immediately to the multitude, but really directed in part against them. The first was the parable of The Two Sons (Matt. xxi. 28-32). In this parable He contrasted the false professions of the Pharisees as represented by the second son with the conduct of the publicans and harlots as represented by the first, who said: "I will not, but afterwards repented and went," and He applied the parable to the incident of the hour by adding, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

Then He followed with a second parable still more severe and pointed, The Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-40). In this He represented the faithfulness of the Jewish nation to their great trust, their rejection of the messengers God had sent through successive dispensations until at last He sent to them His own Son, only to be rejected and murdered by their wicked hands. Then comes the pointed question: "What will he do unto those husbandmen?" and the multitude are ready with the answer: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." The Lord takes up the words of the multitude and echoes them back: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. xxi. 41, 44).

There could be no doubt about the application of this message to the scowling rulers before Him. "When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared

the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet" (Matt. xxi. 45, 46). And so the first battle of the conflict ended and His enemies shrank away defeated and confounded.

The Lord took advantage of the lull to continue His teachings in the presence of the multitude. He proceeded to deliver the third parable, The Marriage of the King's Son, which was addressed rather to the people than to the Pharisees, and which was intended to guard His teachings from possible abuse in the direction of free grace and unconditional salvation for the worst of sinners (Matt. xxii. 1-10). The parable begins, as in the corresponding passage in Luke, with the story of the great feast representing the Gospel, and the first invited guests indifferently excusing themselves from it; on which the master sends out his servants into the highways to gather in the outcasts to the banquet. All this teaches the same lesson of the mercy of Christ for sinners of every class, and, especially, that dispensation of overflowing mercy to the neglected ones, which is to mark the close of the present dispensation and immediately precede the coming of the Lord. That special message of grace to the outcast at home and abroad is the feature of the Christian work of today.

But now He adds another touch of this parable designed to correct the possible abuse of the gospel of free grace and to show that while all classes of sinners are welcome to His mercy, that mercy must not be abused as a cloak for sin, but they must accept His holiness as freely as His forgiveness. The incident of the man that came in "not having on a wedding garment" has a touch of emphasis added to it by the peculiar Greek word used for the negative here (Matt. xxii. 11, 12). There are two Greek words for "not" or "no," the one having reference to the outward fact, the other having reference to the inward feeling of the person respecting this fact. It is the latter that is used here, and it means not merely that he was without a wedding garment, but that he was wilfully without it. These garments were provided by the host and loaned for the occasion to the guests, who passed into a dressing room near the vestibule and were robed for the feast. It is a beautiful picture of the provision Christ has made for the sanctification as well as salvation of sinners. Let us not think that because His mercy is so free we can accept it and still appear before Him in the robes of our self-righteousness. We must accept His

grace in its fulness. Sanctification is not an option, but an obligation.

Dear friend, have you received the wedding garment as well as the invitation to the banquet? It was because of this wilful neglect that the man was "speechless" when the master confronted him with the question, all the more terrible because so kindly expressed, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" How solemn the conclusion of the scene, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14). It will give added force and light to the concluding verse to read it: "For many are called but few are choice." God grant that we may be among the choice ones.

THE HERODIANS.

II. The Tribute Money.

But now the second stage of the conflict comes. The Pharisees have held a lobby and have been reinforced by a new company of auxiliaries. These are called Herodians, a political party, who, in opposition to the popular Jewish element, were adherents of the royal dynasty and Roman power and usually

bitter enemies of the Pharisees. But now they united in a common hatred to the Lord and joined forces to overthrow Him. They brought to Him a subtle political question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" (Matt. xxii. 17.) It placed Him in a very difficult and embarrasing position. If He had said, "No," He would at once have been open to arrest as a ringleader of sedition against the authorities and would have speedily been added to the number of those whose blood, we are told in the gospels, about this time, Pilate "had mingled with their sacrifices." Had He taken the other ground as a Rabbi, that it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, He would have offended the popular sentiment of the nation, who hated the Romans and their taxes, who looked upon it as almost disloyal to Jehovah to recognize any king but God, and who had a secret hope that Jesus Christ was about to deliver them from the Roman yoke and reëstablish the old Theocratic kingdom.

The question was forged in the very pit of hell, it was deep as the serpent's guile, but it was not too deep for His instinctive and unerring wisdom. Fathoming instantly their purpose, He simply called for a coin, and, holding it up, He asked whose image or

superscription it bore, and they, of course, answered "Cæsar's." The Jewish law did not permit them to put any graven image on any coin, or indeed, on anything, and yet they accepted these coins as money and constantly received and paid them in secular business. They were already committed to this by their daily life, and habitually acknowledged the Roman authority by accepting the Roman currency. It was the simplest and most natural thing in the world to add next: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21).

This simple and profound answer, which has settled for twenty centuries the connection between secular and sacred duty and rendered it possible for us to be loyal citizens and yet holy saints, was so obvious and so wise that they really had nothing to say, and the evangelist adds with quiet force: "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way." They were struck so quietly and softly that they scarcely knew what had hit them, and yet they were no less struck and paralyzed and driven from the field feeling themselves, as everybody else felt, that they were again baffled and utterly defeated (Matt. xxii. 22).

THE SADDUCEES.

III. Questions about the Resurrection. (Matt. xxii. 23-33).

They soon returned, however, with a third onslaught. This time they had a new auxiliary, namely, a company of Sadducees. These also were a Jewish sect of limited number but great influence. They were the educated and sceptical element, the Higher Critics of the day. They disbelieved in the supernatural and especially in the resurrection; they were materialists and would have been found today among the Agnostics. They also, it is held by some, discredited a large portion of the Old Testament Scriptures. They had their question ready for the Master and it seemed also unanswerable.

It was a rather coarse story about a woman who had been married in succession to seven different brothers as they had successively died and she had married the next according to the Levitical law. At last she herself died, and now the absorbing question arises in their earnest and inquiring minds: "What are they all to do in the resurrection? What a perplexing time they will have, and which of them is to be her true husband then?"

It was a taking question, and for a mo-

ment there must have been many in the crowd that caught the ludicrousness of the idea and nothing but infinite wisdom could have turned aside the force of the blow. But again the Lord was equal to it. The "greater than Solomon" was there. With quiet dignity He turns upon them with their own words: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." And then He proceeds to explain the true doctrine of the resurrection and to show them that it is not a resumption of the coarser material forms of our earthly life, but a higher existence in which we shall have passed beyond the laws of reproduction and shall dwell in a loftier fellowship with one another, even as the angels now, and all mere human relations shall pass into divine relationships. Then He follows this by a striking quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially from that portion which they believe without question, "the Pentateuch," where God said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "Now," the Lord added, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." They had passed out of human sight and human touch, but not from the fellowship of God. They were with Him and He spoke of them as living men, although

they had long since been mouldering in their graves. The force of this argument was unanswerable and the multitude instantly caught it. "When they heard this they were astonished at His doctrine." But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together." The Greek word here is "muzzled." He had muzzled the Sadducees; it was a case of lockjaw, and, soon after, of paralysis, too.

THE LAWYER.

IV. The Lawyer's Question (Matt. xxii. 35-40).

They next put forth one of their own number, a doctor of the law, with a subtle question respecting the interpretation of the law of Moses, "Master," he asks, "which is the great commandment in the law?" Now, we are told that in the Rabbinical writings there were no less than six hundred and thirteen commandments recognized. Of these two hundred and forty-eight were affirmative statutes, corresponding to the number of members in the human body, and three hundred and sixty-five were negative, corresponding to the number of days in the year. Some of these were called "light" and others "heavy" somewhat like the distinction that the Roman

Catholics make between "moral" and "venal" sins.

This Pharisee wanted to know which were the lighter and which were the heavier commandments. By a great flash of celestial light, the Lord illuminates the subject in a single sentence and tells him that the one supreme commandment of the law is not the question of tithes or fringes, but simply love to God, and the second is but another form of it, namely, love to man, so that truly there is but one great principle in the divine law, and that is Love. Like the law of gravitation, which has simplified all men's former notions of the universe and swings the planets in their orbits and the constellations in their courses and holds in cohesion all the elements of matter without an effort, so love to God keeps us right with Him and one another without the bondage of a thousand petty exactions and constraints.

It was so simple, so beautiful, so conclusive that the young lawyer surrendered, and, as another Gospel tells us, acknowledged that this was "more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

THE SON OF DAVID.

V. The Lord's Own Question (Matt. xxii. 41-46).

Christ now turns upon His baffled foes and presses upon them the question before the multitude: "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then called Him Lord, how is He his son?" This question, which touched the very heart of Christ's own claim as at once the Son of God and the Son of David, overwhelmed them; they could not answer it without acknowledging all His claims, and yet their silence was even a more effectual answer. So complete was their humiliation that it is added by the evangelist: "And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." As we have said above, it was not only a case of lockjaw, but of complete paralysis.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

There is another incident not mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew which seems to belong in this series and at this point. It is the story of the woman taken in adultery (John viii.), and which the best authorities tell us really

belongs to a later portion of John's Gospel, during this last week of the Master's life. There is no place in which it could be so fittingly introduced as here, forming perhaps a climax to this series of assaults and victories.

They dragged her into the presence of the Lord not so much to deal with her as to get some advantage over Him and force Him to some public statement which would either embarrass Him with the people or put Him in opposition to the law. The law required that such as she should be stoned, but His teaching was so mild and merciful that perhaps He would ignore the law and set her free. They wanted a decision. This is not the place to enter into an exposition of that marvelous story in detail, but we know how, without meeting their demand, He again turned the tables on them by asking that the man that was without guilt among them for the same kind of sin should cast the first stone at her; and the extraordinary fact is added that every one convicted by his own conscience, sneaked away in silence and left the Master and the woman alone. We may be pretty sure they did not show themselves again for a while for the confession which they had tacitly made would have ruined their reputations and perhaps driven them out of the synagogue. Then

the Master, without condoning the woman's sin, forgave her and added the solemn words that she never could forget: "Go and sin no more."

WOES UPON THE PHARISEES.

VI. The King Judging His Convicted Enemies (Matt. xxiii. 1-39). Now follows a little section of the day of judgment. The Lord Jesus turns upon His defeated foes and pronounces upon them the fearful words summed up in this entire chapter. Just as there had been eight beatitudes, so we have here eight woes.

The first charges them with being false leaders, shutting up the doors of the kingdom of heaven and neither entering themselves nor allowing the helpless sheep whom they are guiding to enter in (vs. 13).

The second charges them with cloaking their own unrighteousness with mere religious forms and professions, devouring widows' houses and for a pretense making long prayers (vs. 14).

The third accuses them of proselytizing zeal which is not zeal for God but simply human ambition seeking followers and making them worse than themselves (vs. 15).

The fourth refers to their duplicity and de-

ceitfulness in the interpretation of the Scriptures on Jesuitical principles splitting hairs and making fine distinctions, permitting men to "swear by the temple but not by the gold of the temple, and so subverting the Word of God by subtilties of their own reasonings (vs. 16).

The fifth refers to their ceremonialism and tells them that their religion consists in mere questions of tithes and ceremonies while they have omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (vs. 23).

The sixth exposes them as mere formalists who seek to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter while the inside of their hearts "are full of extortion and excess" (vs. 25).

The seventh draws the fearful picture of "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness" (vs. 27).

And the last reminds them that while with sentimental hypocrisy they "build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of the fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets," at the same time they are doing the very works of their fathers and murdering the messengers

of God even as they (vs. 29). Therefore He adds, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify: and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharius, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar" (vs. 34, 35).

Terrible indeed must have been the holy indignation and the burning force with which the holy lips of Jesus poured forth these withering words upon these self-convicted and guilty men, rising at last to the very climax of invective indignation: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (vs. 33).

And that was Jesus. Oh! do not dream in your carelessness and sin that that gentle and forgiving One was incapable of the most awful severity and the most consuming judgment. Above all other wrath the sinner may well fear "the wrath of the Lamb."

But the torrent has spent its force, the heart of Jesus cannot long brook even this merited outburst of judgment and condemnation. Suddenly pausing in the midst of His fiery rebukes

it would seem as if a gush of tears must have poured from His eyes and with broken voice and unearthly tenderness He cries again: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (vs. 37.)

And that was Jesus, too. Blessed be His name, that is the Jesus that we are still permitted to approach. Oh, do not wait until He shall have put on the robes of judgment and risen up to pronounce the sinner's doom. Still He is speaking to us with the same tenderness and reminding us in the same terms how often He has sought us and how often we have rejected Him.

Is there any one reading these lines to whom He is speaking now? Hasten beneath the shelter of His wing from the coming storm, and do not wait until He shall have nothing left for you but His compassion and His tears.

It is said that once a distinguished judge after pronouncing sentence upon a man before him and sending him forth to end his days in a penal colony, put off his judge's cap and looking the man in the face said, "Why have you forced me to do this? You were the friend

of my childhood, I have loved you as I have loved few men; why have you made it necessary that I should speak these awful words that doom you to a misery worse than death?" And he could only weep, and yet his tears did not avail to avert that stroke of judgment.

And so, even Jesus, in these tender, passionate words, did not take back the sentence that He had passed. In condemning them His heart was breaking with tenderness and sorrow, but none the less did He pause and close this solemn chapter by adding, "Behold, your house [Mine no longer, you can have it now] is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (vs. 38, 39).

Chapter XVI.

THE COMING OF THE KING.

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. xxv. 13).

OUR Lord had accepted for the time the homage of the multitude and the titles and honors of the Son of David and the throne of the Messiah! If the nation had only heartily and truly received Him, we can scarcely dream of the results that might have followed. An eloquent writer has ventured to express something of such a dream, picturing the Lord Jesus completing His sacrifice, not through wicked enemies, but by His Father offering Him up even as Abraham offered Isaac on Mt. Moriah, followed by His glorious resurrection and His sitting down upon David's throne and fulfilling for Israel and the world the vision of ancient prophecy without the dark and dreadful centuries of Israel's rejection and punishment.

But this was not to be. Indeed, it could not be with all the other prophecies yet to be fulfilled. And so "He came to His own, and His

own received Him not." Israel as a nation rejected Him and ages had to pass before He could come to them again, as their King and fulfill to them the vision of the promised glory.

But He will surely come and the next portion of Matthew's gospel unfolds to us in His own prophetic words the panorama of events that will lead up to that great Appearing.

The discourses related in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew were delivered by our Lord on Tuesday afternoon immediately after His great conflict with the rulers described in our last chapter and on His way from the temple to His temporary home in Bethany. The first part of the address was no doubt uttered as they departed from the temple, probably through the Golden Gate, and walked down into the valley of Kedron. The last portion was probably concluded as He sat on the slopes of Olivet, looking down once more over the city at His feet. The interpretation of the discourse will be rendered more clear if we bear in mind the questions of the disciples to which it was intended to be an answer.

QUESTIONS OF THE DISCIPLES.

They pointed out to Him the splendid stones and buildings of the temple and He told them,

"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Immediately they ask Him three questions, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. xxiv. 3).

The first part of His discourse would therefore naturally be a reply to their first question, "When shall these things be?" namely, the destruction of Jerusalem. The later portion of His discourse would naturally refer to their other two questions, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It should be borne in mind that the term "world" here employed is not the usual Greek word for the material world. That would be "kosmos"; it is the word "aion," which means "the age," the order of events, and the plan of Providence. The correct translation, therefore, is "the end of the Age," for the end of the Age will not necessarily bring the end of the world.

We shall group the Lord's teachings concerning His coming under a number of clearly defined heads which are brought out with great distinction in His discourses.

IN RELATION TO ISRAEL.

I. The Relation of His Coming to Israel and the Destruction of Jerusalem.

This was the first thing that entered their minds and His and it is also the prominent idea present to the narrator of the Gospel of Matthew, which was specially the gospel for Israel, and brings to the front, in all the Master's teachings, the special references of His addresses to the "chosen people." From verse 4 to verse 28, with the single exception of verse 14, the entire passage seems to apply to Israel and the judgments and sufferings that were to come upon them because of their rejection of the Messiah. There would appear, however, to be two sections in the passage, the one referring to the earlier tribulations of Jerusalem under the Romans, and the other to her later trials at the end of the age. To the Master's view, it seemed like one long perspective for Israel, beginning and ending with a fearful tragedy. Between these two sections, there is thrown in a brief parenthesis in verse 14, which describes the Christian age and the gospel among the Gentiles. For Israel, however, the prospect is dark and lurid, reaching its climax in spiritual delusion and national calamity, without a precedent or parallel.

This is in exact accordance with the predictions of Daniel and Zechariah. Referring to the first destruction of Jerusalem, Daniel had said: "The people of the prince that shall

come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (Dan. ix. 26). And referring to the later afflictions of Jerusalem at the end of the age Daniel had said: "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time" (Dan. xii. 1).

Zechariah also had even more explicitly described these calamities, especially in the later days of Israel. "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

Our Lord's predictions are in exact accordance with these terrible forewarnings. No doubt much of this was fulfilled when the Romans captured the city under Titus and Vespasian, but much of it yet must be in store.

THE CHRISTIAN AGE.

II. His Coming with Reference to the Christian Age. This is condensed into a single

verse, the fourteenth. "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." This is all that the Master says about the Gentile parenthesis which we call the Christian Age and which has now been running its course for nineteen centuries. A single phrase of concentrated light and truth covers all this long period. Let us not think, in our self-conceit, that we Gentiles monopolize the whole prophetic word. Writing to the Gentiles, the apostle Paul said: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." That is to say, we Gentiles have received the gospel for a time because Israel refused it, but after our time of opportunity is over, Israel's will return. This fourteenth verse describes the Gentile age during which this gospel of the Kingdom (and there is but one gospel) is to be "preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations." When this shall have been done to the full extent, our Lord assures us "The end will come."

The evangelization of the world and its universal accomplishment is the most distinct landmark of the Lord's coming. Our Lord's pre-

diction here is in exact accord with the words of the apostle Peter (Acts xv. 14, 15, 16): "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.... After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down." This is the age in which we are living. This is the time of grace for the Gentiles. Oh, let none of us allow "the time of our visitation" to pass by neglected; and let us not fail as the disciples of Christ to meet our high and holy trust to send the gospel as a witness to all nations that we may hasten the coming of our Lord.

THE TRIBULATION.

III. The Great Tribulation.

Coincident with Israel's latest trials is to come that time of trouble known in prophecy as "The Great Tribulation." Speaking of it (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22), our Lord says: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

This time of trouble will be brought about by a variety of conditions. One of them will be God's judgment upon this sinful world, an-

other the outbreak of Satanic power and malignity, and still another, the power of Anti-Christ and his assaults upon Israel and upon all divine institutions that shall remain in the world; and yet another element will be the absence of most of God's people, for the Church will have been withdrawn at the beginning of the tribulation and its watching and holy members caught up to meet the Lord in the air. A world without the godly, a world controlled by Anti-Christ, a world under the personal government of Satan, and a world beneath the outpourings of God's vials of wrath: —surely, that is a picture dark enough to make us watch and pray that "we may escape these things which shall come to pass." It is the promise of Christ to the faithful ones: "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

HIS APPEARING.

IV. The Glorious Appearing of the Lord. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall

all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30). This is the great Epiphany, the public appearance of the Lord Jesus as distinguished from His Parousia, which refers to His previous and secret coming for His own. Now, however, after the tribulation He is to come in the blaze of His glory openly and visibly before the eyes of all the world, and as they see Him "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn." It shall be a day of terror to this godless world and destruction and judgment to the wicked nations that shall be found in opposition to His throne.

We should notice the pronoun "they" instead of "ye." The Lord does not tell them that they are to see Him come; His disciples will be with Him when He comes. The world shall see Him, but we, His followers, will have no business there in that day of terror and dismay. God help us to be found ready and waiting so that we shall escape the tribulation and the day of wrath and be with Him above the storm.

"I see that last and bloody sunset,
I see the dread Avenger's form;
I hear the Armageddon onset,
But I shall be above the storm."

CAUGHT UP.

V. The Rapture of the Saints.

This forms a separate picture (verses 40 and 41). This passage refers to the Parousia of the Son of Man before His Epiphany, His coming for His own. "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Of this He is speaking when He says: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

It is a little uncertain whether the passage in verse 31 also refers to this, "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." This may refer to the final gathering of the tribulation saints, still left on earth after the tribulation at His public appearing. There is no doubt, however, that the passage, verses 40 and 41, must refer to the rapture of His saints as one by one they shall be caught up to meet Him in the air and the unready ones left behind. Dear friend, are you ready for that Parousia and will you be found in "that happy company"?

CHRIST BEFORE THE MILLENIUM.

VI. The Parable of the Fig Tree.

The Lord introduces in the picture of His coming the remarkable natural similitude which He calls "the Parable of the Fig Tree" (verse 32). The peculiarity of the fig tree is that the fruit appears before the leaves, and the application of this to the Lord's coming is that the Lord Jesus will appear before the Millennium. It is not first the luxuriant foliage on the tree and then the fruit as a climax, but it is first the fruit and then the foliage. Or, to drop the figure, it is not first our culture and social, scientific and religious progress, and then Christ coming to a world all ready to receive Him, but, on the contrary, it is first Christ Himself, and then, as the result of His coming, the revolution of modern society and the righting of all the world's ancient wrongs. The coming of Jesus Christ is not an evolution, but a revolution.

AS THE DAYS OF NOAH.

VII. The Condition of the World at the Time of His Coming.

This is still further confirmed by the picture He gives us of the state of human society at His advent. Our post-millennial friends are

fond of telling us of the gradual progress of Christian influences and the improvement of the world and that, after a little while, things will be about right and we can expect the Lord to come down to congratulate us on the good work we have been able to do without Him.

The picture Jesus gives us is entirely different: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the days of the coming of the Son of Man be." We know that the days of Noah were marked by wickedness and crime, and it would seem as if the two crimes most rampant in Noah's time, namely violence and lust, are coming to the front again in our own day in the increasing prevalence of murder, divorce and social corruption. While it is true that the elements of righteousness and spiritual power are making progress and the good are better than they ever were before, there can be no doubt that the bad are worse and the shadow grows as dark as the light grows bright.

SUDDEN.

VIII. His Coming a Surprise.

(Chap. xxiv. 36, 42, 44.) These verses tell us that the Lord's coming will be a shock to this self-complacent world. It will also be a surprise to the modern prophets who have told us all about it so often and still persist in

knowing the very schedule of events and the times which the Father hath put in His own power.

It will not be a surprise to His waiting people. "That day shall not overtake you as a thief." They may not know the day or hour, but they shall know enough to be ready. But to the world it will be a terrific and startling blow. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Even for us, the followers of Christ, the only safety is to be always ready.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE MINISTERS.

IX. The Lord's Coming in Relation to the Ministers of Christ.

His first act at His coming will be to call His servants before Him in judgment. Then shall the faithful ministers receive a great reward. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom His Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you that He shall make him ruler over all His goods" (vs. 45-47).

This is the promise which speaks of the servants who shall be found true to His message

and His flock. But, oh, how awful the doom of the false minister, of the man that has ignored the truth of the Lord's coming and in his heart has secretly hoped that it might not be; and, encouraged by this false theology has yielded to ambition and self-aggrandizement and been drawn into the spirit of controversy and worldliness. Alas for him. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart my Lord delayeth His coming and shall begin to smite his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him and in an hour that he is not aware of and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (48-51).

PREPARATION OF THE CHURCH.

X. The Lord's Coming in Relation to the Members of His Church and Their Spiritual Preparation.

This is brought out in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13). These two classes both represent the followers of Christ. They were all virgins, which certainly represents purity, and they were all looking forward to the coming of the Lord, for "they

went forth to meet the Bridegroom." Then besides, they all had light and a certain measure of oil, and this must stand for the true light and the true life. The difference between them was essential; the one had the source of light and the other had not. The foolish virgins had a temporary supply and the wise had vessels filled with oil, a permanent provision. There can be little question about the meaning of the symbol of oil, always the type of the Holy Ghost. And so the lesson seems most plain that the Wise Virgins represent those Christians who have not only accepted Christ as a Saviour, but have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and been brought into a personal relation with Christ Himself as an abiding source of light and power, while the Foolish Virgins represent the great multitude in the Church of God who are willing to remain on a lower plane and fail to press on into the fulness of Christ. When the Master comes it is too late to rectify their mistake. They go to obtain oil and perhaps they obtain it, but the doors are shut. It would not seem that they are finally lost, bu they are excluded from the marriage feast, they are left in the "outer darkness" of the tribulation. They are not lost, perhaps, but oh, how much they lose!

Dear friend, do not run this fearful risk. The baptism of the Holy Spirit means much to you now for your peace, your holiness, your victory, your power, your service; but oh, it will mean everything to you then. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" This is the one pre-requisite for the coming of the Lord.

THE SERVANTS.

XI. The Judgment of the Servants. The parable of the Ten Virgins has reference to our sainthood, the parable of the Talents has reference to our service. It is found in the paragraph Matthew xxv. 14-30.

The endowment of these talents stands for everything in our natural, spiritual and providential conditions which God has given us for the purpose of fitting us for service and usefulness, everything in a word, which may tell in your life for the glory of God and the good of others. These talents, he says, were given according to "their several ability." God has put each one of us in the very best position to accomplish our own work for Him. There is something you can do that no one else can do, there is some one you can reach that no one else can reach. Your talent may consist of natural ability, social

influence, financial resources, position in the church or the world or special opportunities brought to you in connection with your life work. It is the sum of all the possibilities of usefulness in your life. God expects you to make the most of it for Him and others and is going to call you to account at the coming of Christ for the use you have made of your life.

The principle on which He will judge you will not be the amount of your talent, but the measure in which you have improved it. The man who had but two talents was rewarded as much as the man who had five if it was found that he had made a proportionate improvement of his little endowment. The reward that the Master is to give at His coming will be a higher form of service. The coming age and the future kingdom is not to be a luxurious sinecure, but a magnificent opportunity for higher work and holy activity.

There is one figure in this picture which stands out in awful distinctness. It is the servant who had but one talent, and because it was so little, made no use of it, but wrapped it up in a napkin and brought it back to his Lord with his trifling and insulting excuses. How solemnly it reminds us that the people that are mostly to miss the mark are the or-

dinary people that think they amount to very little and therefore do little or nothing. Oh, ye who think you have but one talent, watch and pray, lest through false humility you lose even that and meet the Master in fearful disappointment and condemnation.

The deep secret, however, of this man's failure, was his utter lack of faith and love toward Christ. He said, "I feared Thee and I knew that Thou wert an hard man." It was the spirit of the natural heart. Faith and love will make a very little ability go a great way; and without it, the largest gifts are vain. When the Master comes He is to judge our works. Oh, that He may find us faithful now and accepted then.

THE NATIONS.

XII. Christ's Coming with Reference to the Judgment of the Nations.

The last picture of His coming is the final parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. xxv, 31-46), which describes the judgment of the nations.

God is judging the nations in providence now and at the coming of the Lord Jesus He will call them before Him in final and solemn Assize, and judge them according to their treatment of His people and their treatment

of Israel. "These my brethren," no doubt refers to Israel literally and also spiritually. According to the way in which the rulers of earth have treated God's ancient people and also treated the Gospel and the followers of Christ, will be their judgment in that day. We see a little section sometimes of that judgment now as the hand of God is breaking those powers that have oppressed the Hebrew people and opposed the Gospel of Christ but we shall some day witness the final act of this sublime Tribunal when the old promise of the seventy-second Psalm shall be fulfilled, and "He shall break in pieces the oppressor."

LESSONS.

Such, then, is the Master's panorama of the events that lead up to His coming. Oh, how solemnly it bids us to be ready, to be faithful, to be watchful and to labor and pray that all our loved ones may be with us in that day, nay that hour which may come at any moment, when "one shall be taken and the other left."

OUR LOVED ONES.

The late Dr. Gordon told of two girls, sisters, who lay down to sleep one night in the same bed. The one, a Christian, the other, a

scoffer. The Christian girl had just come from a religious service in which the preacher had quoted that phrase, "One shall be taken and the other left," and had solemnly warned his hearers of the coming of the Lord. Her heart was so filled with concern for her sister that she could not sleep. She told her of the sermon and her feelings and earnestly begged her to think of her soul's salvation, but she was only met with jests rebuffs and soon the thoughtless girl was fast asleep. The other could only weep and pray in agony until at last she was so distressed that she rose from her bed, and stealing into a closet adjoining, she fell upon her face and poured her heart in sobs and prayers for the salvation of her sister.

After a while the sleeper awoke, and missing her sister from her side, suddenly remembered the conversation of the earlier part of the night. Suddenly it flashed upon her, "What if the Lord had come and she was left?" and then she broke down with alarm and calling for her sister, sought her in the darkness of the room, and at last heard her sobbing in the closet. Throwing herself on her knees by her side, she besought her prayers, and together the two girls found the Saviour and lay down a little later clasped in

each other's arms with the joyful thought that if He should come, they would be together.

Oh, is there any motive that so tenderly appeals to us to labor and pray for our dear ones in view of the coming of the Lord?

THIS PASSING WORLD.

And surely, out of all this there must come to the mind of every thoughtful man and woman the solemn conviction of the uncertainty of this present world and the supreme importance of being ready for that coming age which is so speedily impending. Dear friend, if these things be true, what security have you for the future?

Humboldt, the great traveler, describes in one of his books his first experience of an earthquake. He was in South America at the village of Cumana. Suddenly a shock came and everything beneath him and around him seemed dissolved. The one overmastering impression was, he says, that everything was going, and the things that he had always looked upon as substantial were no longer real. The solid ground was rocking and sinking beneath his feet, the crocodiles ran howling from the rivers into the woods in terror and dismay, the very dogs lay panting

by his side unable to bark or scarcely to breathe, the houses, instead of being a refuge for their inmates, were falling in ruins upon the inhabitants and their screams of dying agony were mingled with the roar of dissolving nature. He looked to the forests and the trees were falling; he looked to the mountains and they were flying from their bases and tossing like the billows of the sea. And then he look up and lo, the sky and heavens alone seemed stable and unchanging, and he thought, "every earthly thing is dissolving and heaven alone remains unmoved."

Dear friend, the hour is coming when everything which you have counted substantial shall dissolve and disappear, and only the things that are above shall be unshaken and remain Oh, have you found your portion there? Have you chosen "the city that hath foundations," and "the kingdom which cannot be moved"?

Chapter XVII.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head and a reed in His right hand, and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews'" (Matthew xxvii. 29).

OUR present study will lead us through the scenes of the Garden, the Judgment Hall, the Cross and the Tomb. But true to the great design of the Gospel of Matthew to reveal the Lord Jesus continually as the King, we shall not see in these scenes the signs of weakness and defeat, but rather the still more signal evidence of victory and power. Even in His bitterest sorrows and His darkest hours, we shall find that Jesus Christ is still the Son of David and the Son of God. The loftiest greatness is not achieved by mere gifts of power; it needs the touch of suffering to add the supreme glory of heroism in the hour of His shame and agony and death. It has been said in language most striking and yet most true: "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus died like a God." With this as our underlying thought, let us gather up the scenes

of His final sufferings and the light that shines from "the Crown of Thorns."

HIS PREDICTION.

I. The Shadow of the Cross (Matt. xxvi. 2).

It has been said most truly of human ignorance of the future that "The veil which hides our future is woven by the hand of mercy." It would multiply tenfold all our trials if we could see them before they come, but with Jesus Christ it was entirely different. The shadow of the Cross overhung all His earthly life. Day by day He saw it drawing nearer as He passed on, exclaiming: "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened till it be accomplished." So we find Him in this passage saying to His disciples: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." His death, therefore, was no mere accident, which came to Him through the superior power of His enemies, but a foreordained result which He had known from the beginning and toward which all His earthly life had been converging. What a dignity and a glory this adds to His voluntary sufferings. He had come to the world to die and now death could bring Him no surprise and no defeat.

CAIAPHAS.

II. The Plot of His Enemies (Matt. xxvi. 3-5).

Next we see the conspiracy of His murderers. It was led by the religious rulers of the people and was hatched in the very palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. The ancient Levitical types had provided that the sin offering should be presented by the leaders of the people for the whole nation. In exact fulfillment of this, it was thus divinely ordered that the death of Jesus Christ should be the official act of the Jewish rulers. Not only so, in the narrative given us in the gospel of John we are even told it was revealed to Caiaphas that it was necessary that "One should die for the people that the nation perish not," and in gathering the Council together to plan for the arrest and condemnation of Christ this was the very reason that he alleged for so doing. The death of Christ thus becomes the exact fulfillment of God's ancient plan and the men that brought it about to gratify their own personal vindictiveness were unconsciously fulfilling "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Thus again the death of Jesus Christ is lifted above any mere accident or human aspect and placed in the divine programme of redemption.

MARY.

III. The Anointing of Mary (Matt. xxvi. 6-13).

This beautiful incident in the house of Simon, the leper, who was probably the husband of Martha at Bethany, was more than a sentimental expression of Mary's love to her Teacher and Lord. It was an act of faith, a faith which had already detected the great purpose of His life and understood as none others had that He had come to die. The Lord expressed this very delicately and yet distinctly as He vindicated her from the unworthy and harsh criticism of Judas and the others and claimed her personal gift as a service accepted for Himself, and added: "She hath wrought a good work on me for in that she poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Here again, we have the hand of God above the hand of man and we see the divine purpose moving calmly on and choosing every instrument and every incident to set it forth and work it out as God's great purpose of love and grace in spite of man's purpose of cruel hatred.

How impressively this incident reminds us that there are ministries our Lord asks for Himself alone which are higher far than all our works of charity and gifts for the poor and

church. Our highest service should be for Him. Are we pouring the incense of our love and worship at His feet? Still again, we are reminded that there are gifts which may be kept too late. Mary had purposed reserving this until after His death and then using it to anoint His lifeless body, but an opportunity came to give it to Him while He was still alive, and her act of timely love was lifted to the dignity of an eternal priesthood and a ministry of which even the Master said: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this which this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

JUDAS.

IV. The Shadow of the Betrayer (Matt. xxvi. 14-16 and xxvii. 3-8).

Over against the beauty and glory of Mary's love falls the dark shadow of Judas Iscariot. But even Judas' treachery is made to redound to the honor of Christ. His very act was but the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy from Jeremiah specifying the very amount that was paid for his crime, and even Judas was compelled, before the tragedy was over, to come back in a fit of remorse and despair and throw his ill-gotten silver at the feet of the rulers and bear a testimony to the innocence of

Christ: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," and as he went out into the darkness that was never to end and hurled himself to destruction, even Judas became one of the long array of witnesses that gather around the cross of Jesus Christ and add to its eternal glory.

THE PASCHAL LAMB.

V. The Passover Feast (Matt. xxvi. 17-25).

This ancient ordinance, the most sacred of all the national feasts of Israel, had for its central figure the slaying of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood on the door posts of their homes, followed by the eating of the flesh of the lamb. This also must bear witness to Jesus Christ. In the providence of God, it was so ordered that His sacrificial death should come during the Paschal Feast, and thus He is set forth as Himself the Paschal Lamb, to whose shed and sprinkled blood all the types of Judaism had looked forward for more than a thousand years.

What a testimony to that cross which to the eyes of men seemed a badge of shame and failure, but which stands out as the very glory of the Old Testament as well as the New.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

VI. The Memorial Feast of the Lord's Supper (Matt. xxvi. 26-30).

The Passover supper blended with a new ordinance which was henceforth to perpetuate the memory of His death among His followers and to be known in future as "The Lord's Supper." The very object of this ordinance is to set forth, not His life, nor His works, nor His miraculous power, but His suffering and dying love. "Ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come" is the apostle's description of the deep and sacred meaning of the Lord's supper.

Other earthly names are remembered and celebrated by the day of their birth; the day of our Saviour's birth is uncertain, and our Christmas celebration is but a guess as to the time, and certainly claims no divine authority for its observance, but the commemoration of Christ's death is the most sacred duty of every Christian and lifts the Cross of Christ so high that it stands:

"Towering o'er the rocks of time."

GETHSEMANE.

VII. The Cup that Passed (Matt. xxvi. 36-46).

The agony in Gethsemane has usually been regarded wholly in the light of a tragedy. It is customary for preachers to quote it as the deepest and saddest evidence of the Saviour's humiliation and sorrow. But there is another

aspect in which it is raised to the height of a great and glorious victory.

There is a passage in Hebrews (v. 7) which tells of some occasion in "The days of His flesh when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that could save Him from death and was heard in that He feared." There is no occasion to which this can reasonably apply except that hour of agony in Gethsemane. If it applies to that, then it is certain that Christ's prayer in the garden that night was heard and the cup did pass from Him. We have been accustomed to tell people that the Lord Jesus prayed in vain, and that, like Him, we must submit to the will of God even when our prayers are not answered. But if this passage in Hebrews be true, His prayer was answered and the thing He dreaded did not come.

How are we to explain it? What was the thing He dreaded and escaped? It seems very plain that it was the fear that He should die then and there under the pressure and agony and through the power of Satan; that He should be crushed by the intolerable burden that He was unable to bear and should be hindered from accomplishing His sacrifice in the true order of God's time and plan. Satan resolved to crush Him and kill Him before the

time, and it was against this that the Lord struggled and prayed and won the victory, for there appeared an angel strengthening Him; and He rose up from the conflict and went forth in the power of God to pass through the scenes of the Judgment Hall and the protracted sufferings of the Cross, and then, in due time, after every scripture had been fulfilled, He laid down His life voluntarily as He Himself had said: "No man taketh it from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." In this view, the agony in Gethsemane is one of the most glorious victories of the Master's life, and encourages us to claim a similar triumph when Satan would kill us before our work is done and by entering into His faith and triumph, live on and labor on until we have "finished our course with joy" and have "nothing to do but to die."

LEGIONS OF ANGELS.

VIII. His Refusal of Angelic Succour (Matt. xxvi. 47-56).

Even His arrest would have been impossible but for His own consent. Another evangelist tells how the men that came to take Him were prostrated at first by His glance and could not have touched Him if He had not voluntarily surrendered. Matthew tells us how He for-

bade His followers to fight for Him, telling them that He had only to pray to the Father and He should presently give Him "More than twelve legions of angels." Twelve legions of angels would have been an army of over 60,000 angelic soldiers. Now we know that one angel was sufficient to slay in a single night an army of 175,000 Assyrians. What would 60,000 angels have meant for Christ's safeguarding? And He had only to breathe a single word and that army would have been around Him and His enemies stricken with swift destruction. But that word was never spoken and the self-restraint of Jesus Christ in this hour of peril is one of the mightiest proofs of His Deity and gives to His arrest the glory rather of a triumphal march than a shameful defeat.

ALONE.

IX. The Forsaking and Denial of Peter and the Disciples (Matt. xxvi. 56-69-75).

When at last His arrest had really come and they saw Him bound and apparently helpless in the hands of His enemies, then his disciples utterly broke down. Of the others it is said: "They all forsook Him and fled," but Peter's was a still worse treachery, for he not only fled but under the pressure of that night of panic he openly and repeatedly denied Him.

Surely, this at least was an evidence of weakness on the Master's part that the very men who had stood nearest to Him should so easily give up their Master and testify against Him. On the contrary, it is one of the strongest and grandest testimonies to the Lord. In one of the old prophetic pictures of the Messiah, it is this very feature that is brought into prominence: "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?" and the answer comes, "I have trodden the wine press alone and of the people there was none with me." The very solitariness of Christ's sorrow is the most majestic touch. There are times in every great and noble life when it must stand alone and even the sympathy and support of the dearest friends appear to be withdrawn. This is the very test of fortitude and heroism and in this hour of solitary ignominy and desertion Jesus stood supreme, sublime.

HIS OWN CONFESSION.

X. Confessing Judgment (Matt. xxvi. 59-66).

He is now arraigned before the court of Caiaphas, but they are helpless to convict Him. At last they appeal to the Lord Himself, and He comes to their aid and makes a confession on which they are able to base His condemna-

tion. He acknowledges all that they have been unable to prove against Him respecting His divine claims that He is Christ, the Son of God, and adds: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." With great delight they listen. He has put into their hands the weapon they had sought in vain, and they cry, "He hath spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? He is guilty of death." So even the condemnation of Jesus was brought about by His own act. His death was a voluntary sacrifice all the way through and the accomplishment of that great purpose for which He had come from heaven, "To give His life a ransom for many."

BARABBAS.

XI. The Substitution of Barabbas (Matt. xxvii. 16-21).

Brought before the tribunal of Pilate, that shrewd Roman could find no cause for His condemnation. But seeing that His accusers were bent on blood, he ventured on a compromise and suggested to them that he should release, as was the custom at the feast, some one person as a concession to the multitude and an act of clemency. In order to compel them, for decency's sake, to consent to the re-

lease of Jesus, he puts as the alternative the release of Barabbas, who is called "a notable prisoner." This man seems to have been a very paragon of wickedness and his name was in the mouths of all as the most desperate of criminals. Pilate reckoned that they would not dare to ask for his life and so, with what he thought great adroitness, he placed the two horns of the dilemma before them and said, "Which will you have, Jesus or Barabbas?" To his consternation, the cry came back, "Not this man but Barabbas." Rather would they set free the vilest of men than give up their hold upon Jesus Christ. Was there ever such a testimony to His innocence and to the spirit of His murderers? But back of all this story of substitution there lies the deepest, sweetest secret of redeeming love, namely: that Jesus Christ becomes the substitute from age to age for just such men as Barabbas; that He bore that day the shame, the wrath, the Cross, that the vilest of men deserved in order that the sinner might go free through His vicarious suffering. That is why we, as we read these lines, are saved from condemnation and accepted by the Father as fully as if we had never sinned because one day our Blessed Substitute took our place and we were released from judgment and are now "Accepted in the Beloved."

PILATE AND HIS WIFE.

XII. Pilate's Testimony to Christ (Matt. xxvii. 18-24).

Both Pilate and his wife are compelled to give their testimony for the innocence of the Sufferer. From the very beginning Pilate knew that "For envy they had delivered Him," but his perplexity was still greater when there came from his wife a pressing message, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." This was a solemn warning from the very heavens, and Pilate longed to yield to all these appeals to his sense of right and justice. But at heart he was a coward and at last he yielded to pressure, vainly thinking that he could shift the responsibility to their shoulders as he washed his hands before them and added one more testimony to the Lord, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." So from the very judgment seat of His enemies the testimony comes: Jesus Christ was righteous and died not for His own sins but for the sins of men.

HIS BLOOD BE ON US.

XIII. The Testimony of Israel's Punishment (Matt. xxvii. 25).

"Then answered all the people, His blood be upon us and upon our children." That was an awful imprecation. Had Jesus Christ been guilty, it would have fallen lightly on Israel's head. Has it fallen lightly? What is the story of these nineteen centuries? The saddest and most terrible of human tragedies. Witness the sufferings of Israel's sons and daughters in every country and every clime. Recall the horrors of the siege and fall of Jerusalem under the Romans, think of the cruel persecutions of the race all through the middle ages, remember the latest scenes from Kishineff and Roumania, and ask what does all this mean if it is not the fulfillment of their own self-inflicted curse; and does it not declare like the voice of many waters, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother"? the very fulfillment of the curse which Israel accepted for His blood was shed in innocency and shed for them.

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

XIV. The Testimony of the Title on His Cross (Matt. xxvii. 37).

Over the cross of Jesus, Pilate ordered this inscription fastened: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Another evangelist tells that they were very much displeased with this and tried to have it changed so as to read, "He said

He was the King of the Jews," but Pilate rudely answered, "What I have written I have written," and the record remained and stands forever as the very echo of Matthew's gospel and God's decree that Jesus was indeed the Son of David and the King of Israel.

REFUSED THE MYRRH.

XV. The Unmixed Cup of Agony (Matt. xxvii. 34).

"They gave Him vinegar to drink mixed with gall and when He had tasted thereof He would not drink." This was intended as an anodyne to deaden His sufferings, a merciful provision of the executioners, but Jesus would have none of it. Not one drop of woe would He abate. He was bearing our cross and He insisted on bearing it to the full. He has done so and there is nothing left for you and me. "Jesus paid it all."

THEIR TAUNTS.

XVI. His Self-Restraint in the Face of Their Taunts (Matt. xxvii. 39-44).

This verse tells how they challenged Him if He were indeed divine to come down from the cross and show it. How easily He could have done so, but not for one moment did He attempt His own vindication. All the humiliation and shame He bore in full and left His

honor and His dignity to His Father's vindication. What but the power of His divine nature could have ever held Him in such self-restraint, knowing, as He did, how easily He might have stricken down the insulting crowd before Him and answered their buffetings with the lightness of His power? There is no strength so great as the strength of self-restraint and O, how this shines out from the cross of Calvary.

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

XVII. The Cup of Wrath (Matt. xxvii. 46).

At last there comes from out of the darkness which had now fallen upon the scene a strange and bitter cry. It was a quotation from the twenty-second Psalm, a prophetic psalm describing the Messiah's sufferings. It was a cry extorted by the wrath of God that was now ruling over His head. Deeper and harder than all the cruelties of men was the hiding of His Father's face, but even this was but part of the programme of prophecy and that cry was but another testimony to His Messiahship as He fulfilled to the letter all that God had said should come to pass. Even that bitter cup of God's curse against sin He drank

to the full and now "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

THE EARTHQUAKE.

XVIII. The Testimony of Nature to Christ (Matt. xxvii. 45).

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour and the earth did quake and the rocks rent." The very sun refused to look upon the agony of its Maker and the earth shuddered at His dying pain. History and tradition tell us that in other lands at this very time the attention of observers was directed to the preternatural disturbance of the material world and the fact that some great tragedy must be taking place somewhere.

THE RENT VEIL.

XIX. The Testimony of Judaism (Matt. xxvii. 51).

"And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." That veil, we know, was suspended between great columns about seventy feet high. It would have been impossible for any human hand to reach the top. It might have been torn from the bottom to the top by powerful hands, but when we read that it was "rent from top to

bottom" we know it must have been the hand of God. And so Judaism from its most sacred shrine bore witness that the great mystery which that sacred veil had covered, namely, the intercession of the Great High Priest, was now about to be accomplished and the way into the holiest of all was opened by the death of Jesus.

THE CENTURION.

XX. The Testimony of the Centurion (Matt. xxvii. 54).

"Now when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earth quake and those things that were done they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God."

This cold and unsympathizing Roman soldier, with no prejudice in favor of the Suffering Victim on that cross, had taken in the whole situation, His own demeanor, His silent majesty and the portents of nature on every side, and as he comprehended it all this was his testimony: "Truly, this was the Son of God." Truly of such a scene we might well say, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

JOSEPH

XXI. The Testimony of Joseph, the Counsellor.

One of the most remarkable testimonies to

Christ was the coming of this man, a member of the Sanhedrin which had condemned Him, to ask the privilege of burying the body of Jesus in his own tomb. Thus the very Council of the nation, through Joseph, bore witness to His innocence and the old prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: "His grave was made with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." His grave had been prepared among the thieves, but instead His body was laid in the tomb of this rich friend.

THE WOMEN

Finally, there is no testimony to the death of Christ so deep and strong as that which comes from the hearts that love Him and that have found in His precious blood the source of their cleansing and salvation.

These were represented yonder by that company of women who "stood beholding" (Matt. xxvii. 55), and who represent that mighty crowd who, through all these ages, have stood beholding with sacred grace until before the vision guilt and sin and sorrow fled away and faith could blend their voices in the song:

> "Here I'll stand forever viewing
> Mercy's streams in streams of blood,
> Plenteous drops my soul renewing
> Plead and claim my peace with God."

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

The following allegory from the pen of Mark Guy Pearse, finely expresses the power of that Cross:

Once I went forth to look for Repentance. I sought her day and night in the City of Mansoul. I asked many if they knew where she dwelt, and they said they had never seen her. I met one, grave and scholarly, who told me what she was like, and bade me seek her earnestly, but he did not tell me where she was to be found. Then, all sad at heart, I went forth without the city walls and climbed a lonely hill, and up a steep and rugged way, until I came in sight of the Cross, and of Him who hung thereon. And lo, as I looked upon Him, there came one and touched me. Then instantly my heart was melted, and all the great deeps of my soul were broken up.

"Ah, Repentance, I have been looking everywhere for you," I said.

"Thou wilt always find me here," said Repentance; "here, in sight of my crucified Lord. I tarry ever at His feet."

Again I went forth to look for Forgiveness. I knocked at many a door in the City of Mansoul and asked for her. And some said they thought she did live there sometimes; and

some said she used to once! and some said she came there occasionally when the weather was fine, to spend Sunday. Then up came one whom I knew by name as Unbelief, with a voice like the croaking of a raven, and he said that Forgiveness never was there and never could be, that she was much too fine a lady to live in so low a place as that and among such a set as they were. So I came forth wearied and sad; and as I reached the city gate I met again the grave scholar, and he gave me much account of her birth and parentage and showed me her portrait, and told me of her gracious works, and he bade me seek her earnestly; but he did not tell me where I could find her.

So I went along my way, looking, but well-nigh in despair, when it chanced that I found myself again upon the high hill, climbing again the steep and rugged path. And I lifted my eyes and saw once more the Cross and Him who hanged thereon, and lo, at the first sight of my dear Lord, Forgiveness met me and filled my poor soul with holy peace and rest like Heaven itself.

"Oh, I have had a weary search for you," I said.

"I am always here," said Forgiveness; "here at my Master's feet."

Long afterwards I wondered within myself where Holiness dwelt, but I feared to go in

search of her. I knew she would never be at home in the low lands and busy streets of Mansoul. All whom I asked about her answered doubtfully. One said she had died long ago; indeed was buried in Eden before Adam came out. One said that she lived away at the end of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, her house was on the brink of the river, and that I must hope to meet with her just before I crossed it. Another argued almost angrily against this notion. "Nay," said he, "she lives farther on still; search as thou wilt, thou shalt never find her till thou art safely across the river and landed on the shores of the Celestial City."

Then I remembered how well I had fared aforetime on that Holy Hill and went forth again. So up the lonely way I went and reached the top of it and looked once more upon my blessed Saviour. And lo! there was Holiness sitting at the Master's feet. I feared to say that I had been looking for her, but as I gazed upon the Crucified, and felt the greatness of His love to me, and as all my heart went out in love and adoration, Holiness rose up, and came to me all graciously, and said, "I've been waiting for thee ever since my first coming."

"Waiting where?" I asked, wondering.

"At His feet," said Holiness. "I am always there."

Chapter XVIII.

THE PRINCE OF LIFE

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew xxviii. 6).

IN keeping with the special design of Matthew's Gospel, it is interesting to notice the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as it shows the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy and reveals Him in His kingly character.

HIS OWN PREDICTIONS.

I. First, it was in accordance with His own predictions and had been always contemplated as part of His redeeming plan. In the very beginning of His earthly ministry, when they asked Him for a sign by which to authenticate His claims, His answer was, "Destroy this temple and I will build it again in three days." "But He spake of the temple of His body." Again in Matthew xvi. 21, which is before the transfiguration, we find Him showing unto His disciples "how He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day."

In the following chapter (Matt. xvii. 22-23)

we read again, "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill Him and the third day He shall rise again."

Still later, on His last journey to Jerusalem, we read (Matt. xxv. 17-19): "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify Him and the third day He shall rise again."

So widely known were these announcements that His enemies were familiar with them, and after His crucifixion they went to Pilate and said (Matt. xxvii. 63), "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive After three days I will rise again."

These repeated announcements of His resurrection give an emphatic and conclusive significance to the value of that resurrection as an evidence of His claims. It was the one sign which He always submitted as the supreme test of His divinity and His authority as Messiah. When they demanded a sign from heaven, He had said unto them that "no sign should be

given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah," and that even as Jonah had been "three days and three nights in the whale's belly," so He, the Son of Man, should be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Therefore we find the apostles in their preaching to an unbelieving world always insisting upon the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the corner stone of Christianity. The apostle Paul in the fifteenth chapter of I. Corinthians builds up a powerful argument on it and declares: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins."

In one of the most powerful books of a generation ago, Dr. Horace Bushnell's "Nature and the Supernatural," there is a chapter on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the most conclusive piece of evidence in this class of theological literature. The writer on one occasion submitted this argument for the resurrection of Christ to a learned lawyer who had confessed himself an unbeliever in Christianity. The lawyer promised to weigh the evidence and study the case. At the end of a fortnight, he returned and frankly confessed that the argument was overwhelming and that he had no doubt, and never again could have any doubt, that Jesus Christ had really died and risen

again and that the claims of Christianity were divine. At the same time, he added that he was not yet a Christian and now discovered that he did not even wish to be and that the trouble was not in his head but in his heart.

The resurrection, therefore, of the Lord Jesus Christ was designed as His own especial vindication and was announced by Himself again and again, and therefore, when it occured exactly as He had predicted it, its effect is irresistible and overwhelming.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES.

II. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was in Accordance with the Prophecies of the Old Testament. The ancient story of Abraham and Isaac and the offering on Mt. Moriah was an obvious foreshadowing of the resurrection of Christ. Speaking of it the apostle says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." Isaac's release from that sacrificial altar was a figure of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Abraham had even expected Isaac to be raised from the dead

if the sacrifice had really been consummated.

The story of the prophet Jonah was a type of Christ's resurrection. Jonah's burial in the bowels of the sea monster was a distinct type of Christ's entombment in the heart of the earth and his coming forth on the third day completed the type and foreshadowed the resurrection of the Son of Man. David in the sixteenth Psalm uses language which the apostle interprets as having reference exclusively to the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "My flesh also shall rest in hope for Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades neither wilt thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." Speaking of this on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter thus comments on it: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses" (Acts ii. 29-32). To the same effect, also, the apostle Paul quotes this passage in his address to the Jews

at Antioch (Acts xiii. 36-37). "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption. But He whom God raised again, saw no corruption."

The greatest of all prophets, Isaiah himself, does not fail to point out the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah liii. 10 we read: "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." This language evidently describes a Sufferer who survives His sufferings, prolongs His days and lives afterwards to rejoice in the fruits of His great sacrifice.

So the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is true to the Messianic ideal and we may say of it as He Himself said in His conversation with the disciples on His walk to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures and said unto them, Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to

suffer and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke xxiv. 26-27 and 45-56).

VICTORY OVER HIS ENEMIES.

III. The Resurrection of Christ was a Victory over the Plots of His Foes. They had specially feared this very thing and had laid their plans to circumvent it. They went to the governor immediately after His death and told him that they expected the disciples to come and steal His body from the tomb and then pretend that He had risen from the dead. They were given permission to place a powerful guard of Roman soldiers for three days before the tomb and also to close the sepulchre with a great stone and securely fasten it with the Roman seal, making it a treasonable crime for any one to break that seal and open the sepulchre. Everything was done that they asked for, and when, in spite of all their precautions, the resurrection was accomplished according to the divine order, their very plot only added to its significance and made it the more glorious a vindication of the Lord.

They could not say that they had been surprised; they did all that they could to prevent it and failed, and they must stand the consequences of their defeat and concede the claim of the friends of Christ.

Still more emphatically have we a right to demand from them some light on the disposal of the body. Human courts refuse to proceed with a charge of murder unless the body is produced. We may well refuse to consider the charge of the stealing of Christ's body unless our opponents can produce that body and show us what was done with it. How would it have been possible for that little company of terrified men and women who had fled from the Judgment Hall in dismay, who had given up their Master and their cause as lost, who were without means or influence or human resources; how would it have been possible for them in the face of the whole Roman government and the keen, watching eyes of the entire Jewish nation on guard against this very thing happening, how, we ask, would it have been possible for them to have stolen away that body and succeeded afterwards in permanently concealing it from the keen scrutiny that would have hunted it down with all the detective resources of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities? The idea is simply preposterous and the question answers itself.

The story of the Roman soldiers that they had slept and been surprised by the disciples would not have stood a moment with Pilate if he had really believed it, but as a good natured

concession to the men who were sufficiently angry with him already, he took their bribe and allowed it to pass while he laughed in his sleeve and knew as well as they that they had only tried to fool him and themselves too. So the very efforts of the adversary recoiled upon his own head and left the evidence of Christ's resurrection unassailable.

ANGELIC WITNESSES.

IV. Christ's Resurrection was Witnessed by the Angels of God. Not often do these mighty beings interpose in human affairs. Certainly they do not come down from heaven to play a farce such as the enemies of Christ's resurrection would imply. Their presence on this occasion intimates that some stupendous event had occurred. There were apparently two angelic parties, the one that rolled away the stone and two others that afterwards were found sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. So mighty was this glorious being that "His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." But as the women drew near with their loving offerings for the body of Jesus he answered and said unto them" "Fear not ye for I know that ye seek Jesus which is crucified. He is not here for He

is risen as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay."

The voice of heaven proclaims the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The mighty angels, who came down at Sinai and at the Saviour's birth and who are to come once more when the Lord returns were there to herald His victory over the grave and the ushering in of the great redemption which His death assured. Joyfully we listen to their message and echo back the glad refrain, "The Lord is risen indeed."

HUMAN WITNESSES.

V. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is Established by the Strongest Human Testimony. We have in this chapter the words of the women who had gone to anoint His body in the early morning and who heard first the message of the angels and immediately afterwards the very voice of Jesus Himself as He met them on the way, saying "All Hail," and sent them on with the glad command: "Be not afraid, go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see Me." The other evangelists add many similar testimonies respecting the various appearings of Christ after His resurrection. The whole evidence is summed up by the apostle Paul in the strong language of I. Cor. xv. 4: "He rose again the

third day according to the Scriptures, and He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all, He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time." The cases of our earthly courts are all founded upon human testimony. If we cannot believe the testimony of honest men and women, then thousands of lives have been sacrificed by public execution and thousands of sentences have been passed by men upon their fellow men which were unjust and cruel. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on precisely the same testimony on which men are convicted every day in our courts of justice, and as we have stated above, the evidence of Christ's resurrection is in every way as conclusive and unassailable.

SUPERNATURAL SIGNS.

VI. The Resurrection of Christ was Signalized by the Natural World. We are told "there was a great earthquake." The earth rocked at His death and it shook once more with the travail of a great birth when He came forth from its bowels, the first fruits of the new

creation. This was but in keeping with the testimony of nature everywhere, for God made the little seed that germinates and bursts forth from its tomb in the dark soil of earth and the opening bud and leaf and flower, all to be types of the great doctrine of the resurrection. He made the little chrysalis which emerges from the dark womb of nature and is transformed into the gorgeous butterfly to tell of the higher transformation of grace. Truly it has been said:

> "All nature dies and lives again
> The flower that paints the field,
> The trees that crown the mountains' brow
> And boughs and blossoms yield."

DEATH DESTROYED.

VII. Christ's Resurrection was His Victory Over Death. He had gone down into the den of the King of Terrors in single combat and come forth Conqueror, and not only had come forth alone, but brought with Him a train of rescued captives. In Matthew xxvii. 52, we read: "And the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

These were the first fruits of the resurrec-

tion and they are pledges of that great company who at His second coming will come forth from the cemeteries of earth and will be clothed upon with glorified bodies and enter with Him into the inheritance of the Age to Come.

Henceforth death is a conquered foe, its sting is gone and to the child of God it has no terrors. It may still come to him as it came to the Master, but it will be as a servant and not as a master, to open the gates of heaven and let us pass into the joy of our Lord; for "He hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." And He Himself has told us "If a man keep My sayings, he shall never see death."

SATAN OVERTHROWN.

VIII. Christ's Resurrection was His Victory over Satan. Death was but one of Satan's dark disguises. When Jesus conquered death, He conquered "him that had the power of death, that is the devil." His resurrection has guaranteed the final overthrow of the "prince of darkness," and standing by that open grave we can put our feet upon his neck and triumph over him as a conquered foe.

SIN PUT AWAY.

IX. Christ's Resurrection was His Victory over Sin. He went down into that tomb as a

person might go into a dungeon under a sentence for debt and crime. Had He remained in that prison, it would have shown that the debt was still uncancelled and the sentence still in force. But when He comes forth in victory and glory, all the officers of heaven's court of justice waiting upon Him and the Father Himself recognizing Him and taking Him to sit down by His side on the Ascension Throne, then we may know that the debt is paid, the cross is cancelled and the power of sin destroyed. His deliverance was your deliverance for "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." Therefore faith can shout its triumph: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

But not only does His resurrection cancel the curse that was against us, it brings the power of His life to dwell within us and purifies from the dominion of sin. Our life is just an impartation of His resurrection life. He rose from the dead not for Himself but in union with His body, the Church, and that resurrection guarantees to each of us the power to rise above sin and into all the resources of His grace and the fulness of His life. Sanctifi-

cation as well as salvation springs from the open tomb and the life of the risen Lord and the very secret of it is: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans vi. 11-13.

HEAD OVER ALL THINGS.

X. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Guarantees Victory over every Obstacle that can Obstruct our way. It is the pattern of His kingly power over all forces and adversaries and guarantees to us that abide in Him and press on in the power of His resurrection that nothing can prevail against us but that all things shall be subdued under the victorious feet of overcoming faith.

There is a striking and beautiful feature about the resurrection of Christ that we may not have noticed. The rolling away of the stone which had closed His tomb was not, by any means, necessary for Christ's resurrection. He had risen and come forth before that stone

was moved. The power that could pass through closed doors after His resurrection could easily pass through that mass of the intervening rock. The stone was rolled away, not for the convenience of the Lord, but for the convenience of the women that they might be able to enter in and see the proofs of His resurrection. When the women came, He was not coming from the tomb through the open gate but He was approaching the tomb from the open garden where He had already been.

This is indeed most blessed. The Lord Jesus can pass through the stones of difficulty and if we are walking with Him we can pass through them, too, and so rise above them that even if they still remain they cannot impede us or imprison us but we may overleap their barriers and laugh at their resistance.

Have we spiritual difficulties, temptations and obstacles? Let us not wait for them to pass away but rise above them in the resurrection life of Christ, and instead of being hindered by them, turn them into occasions of greater victory and blessing.

God help us, like that mighty angel, to sit down upon the stones that threaten to obstruct our way and look into the face of Satan, sin, sickness and the world until, like the Roman guards, they shall be ashamed and flee away.

Chapter XIX.

THE MEDIATORIAL KING.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew xxviii. 18-20).

THE manifestation of the Lord Jesus here recorded was, in some respects, the most remarkable of all His appearings during the forty days. It was the only one by special appointment, the others being merely incidental and mostly unexpected. This He had arranged for even before His crucifixion, saying to His disciples, "After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee;" and this had been the message of the angel to the women on the morning of His resurrection: "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you." This also was the direct message of Christ Himself as He first met the women returning from

the sepulchre: "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me."

THE MEETING IN GALILEE.

This, then, had been the special appointment for His great meeting with all His disciples, and it seems a little strange, in view of the urgency and emphasis with which the message had been given, that they were so slow in obeying it, and in meeting their appointment with Him. They tarried in the neighborhood of Jerusalem at least eight days after the resurrection, for there were certainly two Sabbaths in immediate succession in which He appeared to them there. Were they waiting for Thomas to join their number, or were they needlessly tardy in beginning their journey? Perhaps the cause of the delay was in order that all the disciples might receive the message and have time to attend the solemn convocation.

The place appointed we are not told; it was a mountain in Galilee. It could scarcely be Mount Hermon, the Mount of Transfiguration, for that would be more remote and difficult of access than was necessary. It may have been the same mountain where the sermon of Matt. v-viii was delivered, the famous Horns of Hattin, where He had first proclaimed the principles of His kingdom to the

world. It is probable that the five hundred brethren, of whom Paul speaks in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians as having all seen Him at once, were the persons present at this gathering. They formed the surviving few who still remained faithful after the tragedy of the crucifixion.

HIS APPEARING.

At length they have come together and are waiting for His appearing. It was the first great missionary convention that the world ever held, and it is most remarkable that the only appointment that Jesus made with His disciples after the resurrection was a missionary one. What a solemn emphasis it gives to the great commission and the glorious work of evangelizing the world, to fully realize the dignity with which Christ has invested this great occasion! At length they were assembled, and the Lord appeared in their midst. His coming to them seems to have differed in the form of its manifestation from any of His previous appearings. The Greek word, translated "came to them," has a special shade of meaning, implying the gradual approach—"He came toward them," becoming visible at first at some distance and majestically coming nearer, until at length He stood before them, coming

down, perhaps, from the lofty mountain top which rose above their heads. His appearance was impressive enough to throw most of them upon their faces in adoring reverence; yet there were some, even here, who doubted His identity.

HIS MESSAGE.

Then He addressed to them His great and important message, containing, first, the claim of His kingly power and prerogatives; secondly, His great commission to them to go forth and establish His kingdom among all nations, and thirdly, the promise of His presence through all the days until the end of the age. Let us realize, as we dwell upon these three great themes, that this was not a message to the eleven but to all the disciples of Jesus Christ; to all the days until the end of the age; for the company He had in His mind's eye must have included all that gathered around Him and would take up His commands even unto the end of the age of which He spoke.

A KING.

1. The Royal Proclamation, "All Power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This is really the manifesto of our King,

in assuming His mediatorial throne. In declaring that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, He does not refer to His primeval deity and His Divine rights, but to that special kingdom and authority given to Him in the eternal covenant of redemption on account of His finished work. It is something that has now been given to Him; it is the throne of the Mediator which He assumes at the Father's right hand, for the purpose of accomplishing the great work of redemption, for which He has already suffered and died. It is that of which He declared, "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand." "He must reign until He hath put all things under His feet."

The word "power" here more exactly means "dominion, authority," and has reference to the sceptre and sovereignty of a king. The Lord Jesus means that He has been appointed to administer the government, both of heaven and earth, until the consummation of redemption. It is, indeed, a glorious and transcendent claim.

POWER TO SAVE.

1. He has all power to settle the standing and destiny of every sinner, and to control all

our future prospects and our relations to God. He Himself could say, "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Through His Name and the acceptance of His words all sins are forgiven, and the guilty soul in a moment translated out of the kingdom of Satan and from the curse of sin and hell to the glorious liberty of the children of God and heirship of His everlasting kingdom. He has power, in a moment, to arrest the sentence of judgment and condemnation, and to proclaim the guilty acquitted, justified, and joint-heirs with Himself of all the hopes of the Gospel.

The power of salvation is in His hands. Once, when visiting the Castle of Toulon, in France, the emperor gave to a friendly king the right to set a single prisoner free, and he accepted it as a royal compliment; but the Son of God has received from the Father the right to emancipate every criminal under the sun from every curse of the law of God if he will accept His mighty clemency. Well may we rejoice in the power of Jesus,—His power to save. Well may the prophet cry in wonder and admiration, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

THE HOLY GHOST.

2. He imparts and controls the power of the Holy Ghost. The mighty spirit of Pentecost is His gift. The power that convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment is from Him. The power that clothed the apostles with such resistless might and divine efficiency is the power of our risen Christ, for Peter said of Him, "Having received of the Father, honor and glory He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear; therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." He has power still to awaken the most insensible soul and break the most hardened heart. It was He who struck Saul of Tarsus and broke his heart by a glance and word. It was He who convicted the rude jailer in the midnight hour. It was He who opened the heart of Lydia as the sun opens the blossoms of spring; and He still has power to draw the sinner, to melt the stony heart, to conquer the stubborn will, to sanctify the sinful soul, to consecrate the whole being to Himself.

Is there anything that we need in our own spiritual life or in our work for souls? Our

glorious King has all power in heaven and in earth to accomplish it.

AS OUR INTERCESSOR.

3. He has power to give efficacy to our prayer. He is our Great High Priest as well as King. "Him the Father heareth always." His hands receive our imperfect supplications, and cleanse them from their defects, and add to them His own intercessions and the incense of His perfect offering, and then He claims them as the right of His redemption, and fulfills them by the might of His omnipotence. Therefore there is nothing too hard for Him to grant to our supplications, or too difficult for us to ask of His Almightiness, when we remember that we are presenting our requests in the very name and character of Him who has "all power in heaven and in earth." "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, * * * let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace." As we go forth in our work for God and in fulfilment, especially, of the great commission of this passage, our weapon is chiefly prayer; and in the light of this mighty manifesto, what may we not dare to claim for our own efficiency and the evangelization of the world?

IN PROVIDENCE.

4. He has all power in the realm of providence. The burning wheels of Ezekiel's vision all move at the touch of His hand; the chariots of the vision that Zechariah saw riding through the earth and putting all its conflicts at rest, go forth at His bidding. The thrones of earth rise and fall at His command. The events of history are the outworking of His plans. The book with the seven seals is held by His hand and opened by Him alone. It is not true, of course, that He is responsible for the wickedness and willfulness of man, but His hand is over all man's ways and His providence overrules all events. We see this constantly in His earthly ministry, and in His government of the church in the Acts of the Apostles. How easily He could send Peter to the sea for the single fish which had the golden coin in its mouth, sufficient to meet His needs! How exactly He brought the assembled multitudes to Pentecost, at the right time, to receive the Holy Spirit, and then scattered them all over the world! How wondrously He brought together Philip and the eunuch in the desert at the right moment, and then sent the converted prince to evangelize a kingdom and a continent! How easily He could lay His hand on the life

of the impious Herod, and protect the trusting Peter from his violence! How marvelously He guarded the life of Paul through perils of persecuting foes, through perils of waters and perils of every enemy, until his work for Him was accomplished! How marvelously the Old Testament illustrates His providences! He could send the child of a Hebrew slave, doomed to death, into the house of Pharaoh, to become the child of Egypt's king, and the deliverer of Israel from the man who had sought his own life in infancy. He could lead an army of three millions for forty years through the barren wilderness, and sustain them without hunger or lack. He could send a Hebrew maiden into the house of Persia's monarch and make fair Esther the deliverer of her people. He could use Cyrus, without his understanding it, to be the restorer of Israel's scattered tribes when the seventy years were literally fulfilled, and make Daniel's captivity the occasion of his life and testimony in Babylon and the subjugation of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius at the feet of Israel's God. He could give Jeremiah courage to be fearless and faithful for forty years, amid the perils of Jerusalem's last days, and then He could protect and guard his life, alone, of all others, in the hour of her fall and amid the massacre of her inhabitants. And He who did

all this is Jesus, our Lord and Christ, with power undiminished, and only waiting for faith to claim its yet mightier victories in these last days.

What God wants today in His Church, and in His work, is not so much that the world shall see the power of the Church, as the power of her Lord and the presence of Him who goes forth with His weakest servants and becomes their might and their mighty Victor. Oh, as we go forth to evangelize the nations and to represent our God amid the mighty forces of the world's last days, let it be our supreme mission to realize and show forth the might of our Anointed King, and so to stand for Him that the world can see once more that He has "all power in heaven and in earth."

IN NATURE.

5. He has all power over natural laws and forces. While this material world is His creation, and He does not usually mar nor interrupt the uniform movement of the forces and laws that He has framed, yet He can suspend them at will and substitute higher forces if He pleases, just as the engineer can stop the engine or reverse it at his will. And so the Lord Jesus holds in His control the elements of nature, and still can quell the storm or bid

it come; can counteract the poisonous malaria or render it harmless; can vitalize these exhausted physical frames with His divine life until "out of weakness they are made strong," and can carry and sustain us through all the difficulties and apparent impossibilities that may surround our work for Him. Let us go forth, especially in the work of missions, realizing this, that nature is subordinate to redemption, and the natural subordinate to the spiritual, and the kingdom of matter is under the control of the King of Saints.

OVER MEN.

6. Again, He has all power over the minds and passions of men. He can hold back the murderer from his design or render him helpless in his attempt. Dr. Paton tells us how often the savages of Tanna assembled to take his life, and some chief was led to stand up in a critical moment, and by an unlooked for suggestion to turn them aside from their plan, and they dispersed without hurting a hair of his head; and how he had gone through armed and furious crowds of naked savages, determined to murder him, and escaped their hands; turning sometimes to them and commanding them, in the name of the God of heaven, to disperse and desist; and sometimes, seeing

their muskets pointed and their spears poised, and yet in a few moments fall unusued to the ground, and his life miraculously spared. Our blessed Christ has still this power in every place where His servants need His protecting presence, for He has "all power on earth." Kings' hearts are in His hand, and He can still say to all our foes, "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm." He can still induce men to receive us, to accept our testimony, to help us by their influence, their means and their coöperation. It was He who gave Daniel favor with his masters in Babylon, and Joseph the confidence of his king, and Mordecai his place of power in Persia, and Paul the confidence of the Roman captain and of Cæsar's household; and in every age He has shown how He can put His hand on men when He needs them, and call them in a moment to the place He means them to fill.

Oh, that we might know better and trust our Almighty King! Then would we trust less in man and care less, either for his frowns or his favor but, moving on the might of a divine dependence, would know that God would bring to us all men that we need for His work, and help us, by many or by few, as He sees best.

OVER THE CREATION.

7. Christ has all power over the lower orders of creation. "Behold I give you power," He says, "to tread on serpents and scorpions... and nothing shall by any means hurt you." He that went with Daniel into the lion's den has gone many times since then with men like Arnot into the jungles of Africa, and paralyzed the fury of the savage beasts and made them slink away abashed before the keen and fearless eye of His trusting child.

OVER SATAN.

8. Christ has all power over Satan and all our spiritual foes. We are so glad of this. We meet our adversary with the assurance that he is a conquered foe in the presence of our Lord. We may well fear him in our own behalf, but as we claim the abiding presence of our Christ, he is but a toothless lion, a disarmed and humiliated foe and an empty shadow and sham. Let us not dread his power nor try to evade his fury, for he will do his worst against us; but with our Master in our midst we need not be afraid; his assaults will only end in greater victories, and in all these things "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Are we not afraid sometimes, and shrink from positions where we

know we shall meet the adversary's wrath? Let us no longer dishonor our Lord, but know that the places of most peril are the places of the most absolute safety.

OVER ANGELS.

9. Christ has all power over angelic beings. These mighty creatures who perform the executive offices of the government of God, and through the universe with their ceaseless ministries, all go forth under the orders of our Anointed King. Myriads of them crowd this earth and wait upon the saints of God, but they are all subject to our Master's orders. Occasionally the curtain parts enough for us to see the shining form of one or two as they are engaged upon their ceaseless services, but when we see them not, they are doubtless ever near. The Old Testament is full of their interpositions in human affairs, and the New has many examples of it. It was an angel that opened the Redeemer's tomb; an angel that told Mary of the resurrection; an angel opened Peter's prison and smote his persecutor; an angel stood on the tossing ship by the side of Paul and promised him deliverance. And, surely, their ministry did not end when the great apostles passed home. Unseen by mortal eyes they have still fulfilled their

loving tasks through every generation; and when each of us shall close our eyes on the last human face, we shall find some shining companion by our side gazing upon us with a look of quiet recognition and tender affection, smiling at our look of wonder, and saying to us, perhaps, "I have known you for half a century, better than your mother, your wife or dearest friend. I nursed your infancy, guarded your childhood, protected your manhood, hovered over your dying bed and now am waiting to guide your spirit home."

Who of us cannot remember some moment when we had just escaped a sudden peril, or stood within a hairbreadth of death, and as our palpitating heart recovered its pulsation, a strange heavenly hush breathed over our spirit and a voice almost seemed to whisper, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Samuel Rutherford tells us, how, when a child, he fell into a deep well. For a long time he struggled to hold on to the slippery sides and called in vain for help, and at last began to sink. Just as he was perishing, he says, a beautiful man slipped quietly down into the well, lifted him out without a word, and left him safely on the ground above and immediately disappeared. The glorious old saint did

not doubt that it was, literally, an angel of the Lord.

How often they have interposed for the visible deliverance of God's servants we cannot tell. Who knows but they come in human guise sometimes, when all other help has failed. Enough to know that when we need them they are at hand in the most lonely place, and they are all under the command of the Son of God; for it is said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," and in the book of Revelation we see them going forth at His bidding to fulfill His mighty purposes in these last days.

OVER EARTHLY RULERS.

10. Finally, our risen Christ is yet to have all the power of earth's kingdoms under His sceptre and to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. God will overturn and overturn and overturn, until He come, whose right it is, for the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. This is Christ's covenant right and reward, and the Father's heart will never be satisfied for His Son until His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. We shall yet see our blessed King wearing the crown of all the world, and we shall see every knee bowing to Him, and every tongue confessing that He is Lord.

"He shall reign, from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway;
He shall reign, when like a scroll
Earth and heaven shall pass away."

HIS MESSAGE.

II. The Great Commission, "Go Ye Therefore, and Disciple All Nations."

Because of His power, and because of His right, He bids His disciples go forth to establish His kingdom among all nations.

TO THE NATIONS.

1. We must be struck, first of all, with the boldness and majesty of this command. He did not send them now simply to individuals, but to nations. He looked upon the mighty communities of earth as not too great for the conquest of His kingdom, and the mission of His followers to win. He sends us forth as ambassadors to earth's great powers and as His soldiers against the mighty hosts of humanity. The work of foreign missions ought to deal very directly not only with individuals but with nations. God has a purpose in the tribes and tongues of earth. He wants them all represented in the great triumphant song which is to echo around the throne, and we ought not to be satisfied while a nation or tongue is not evangelized. Indeed, His com-

ing is directly connected with the evangelization of all nations, not necessarily all individuals. The Church of today ought to lift up her eyes upon the fields and see how far and how faithfully she has fulfilled this commission with respect to neglected nations and unevangelized races and peoples. It would seem to be the special call of Christ today to each of us to see, so far as in us lies, that every community that has not yet received the Gospel is specially visited with the message of our King. There are still many tribes of earth who have not received the message. There are scores in Africa and several in Asia, who have yet no part in the Chorus of Redemption, and were the Lord to come tomorrow, their tongue would not be heard in the great millennial psalm which shall arise at His coming, when

> "All people that on earth do dwell,
> Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice."

UNIVERSAL.

2. The universality of the commission is sublime. It sweeps the circumference of the world. It spreads its royal sceptre over an empire more magnificent than Nebuchadnezzar claimed or Cæsar saw. It reaches far beyond the narrow limits of Jewish patriotism or imperial ambition. Never empire so grand and

universal as that which, bye-and-bye, shall join in the chorus of coronation,

"Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Oh, as we have already said, let each missionary burn to make the victories of the Gospel as universal as the commission which He has given, and may each of us have the holy aspiration to add one other tongue or one other tribe that none have reached before, to the glorious song which is soon to burst forth when the ransomed hosts from every land shall, with songs, surround the throne, and it shall indeed be true,

"Ten thousand are their tongues
But all their hearts are one."

GO.

3. The commission given is an aggressive and progressive one: "Go ye." It does not imply by any means the idea of settling down in comfortable repose and consolidating great ecclesiastical institutions; but it is a ministry of itinerance, and we very much doubt whether any church or servant of the Lord should cease to go in this sense of aggressive and progressive work. The missionary is to go until all

regions are visited and all tribes evangelized; the Church is to go until all who are at liberty have become the messengers of the Gospel. In the early Church we find not only Paul and Barnabas going, but Aquila and Priscilla, working people, Gaius and Aristarchus, and many of Paul's companions constantly moving with him from place to place, evidently men and women from the ordinary walk of life, who counted it their commission to share in the toils and tasks of the Gospel. The time has come when the heathen world needs more than stereotyped ministers to meet its awful needs, and Christ is calling a whole army of plain and practical men and women to cover its needy fields. Good Pastor Harms long before suggested a way; namely, the missionary colony, and today in Africa and India thousands of happy native Christians are the fruit of a humble missionary movement, in which a whole parish almost moved bodily to the heathen world and settled down among them to teach them how to live as well as how to know the Lord. God grant that the next few years may put such a go in the hearts of thousands of the consecrated children of God that they cannot longer stay at home, and a great army of picked men and women, who fear no hardship and seek no rest short of the

Master's coming shall spread over all the neglected fields of the heathen world!

EVANGELIZATION.

4. The first process in this great work is denoted by the term "disciple all nations." This is not "teach," which is an incorrect translation, but rather evangelize, that is, bring to the knowledge of Christ and the fold of Christ. It is, in a word, the work of evangelization, the quick and world-wide proclamation of the Gospel in every land, with a view to gathering out all who are willing to confess the truth and follow the Saviour. This is the first work of missions, and until this is done the work of costly organization and education should be held in subordination. Too little has this been the object of missionary societies and too much the building up of elaborate establishments. This was the Apostolic method. In his great missionary journeys Paul swept over vast fields. In a few months he had itinerated over Cyprus, Iconium and Central Asia Minor, and then was ready to go over these fields again and establish them more formally. On his later journeys he swept with similar celerity over Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia in a few years, preaching the Gospel in many countries and gathering multitudes to

Christ. This is the world's great need today. In a single generation its entire population will have passed away, and what has to be done must be done at once.

One night, in Albert Hall in London, the royal family of England and the most distinguished men and women of the nation assembled and stood up upon their feet to receive and honor Henry Stanley because he had successfully penetrated Africa and rescued a brave man from isolation and peril. Oh, what honor will heaven pay to the men and women who will penetrate these dark regions for a nobler purpose and rescue their millions from the tyranny of Satan and the curse of despair! Surely all heaven will stand up some day to receive them and the Son of God Himself will make them sit down and will serve them with His own Royal hands.

ORGANIZATION.

The work of evangelization is to be followed by the work of organization. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This is the ecclesiastical part. But there is a notable absence of all ecclesiasticism. We find no name of modern sect in this organization. The only name into which they are baptized is that of God. There

must of course be organization: the public confession of Christ in baptism; the uniting of the little flock in the name of Christ, and the proper discipline and government of the Church. But this should be as simple as possible, and adapted in each case to the exigencies of the case, and whatever may be the denominational form, its spirit should always be as large as the one body of Christ.

TEACHING.

6. The last direction respecting this great work has reference to what we might call the edification of the Church. It includes the building up of the Church of Christ in truth and holiness; "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This, of course, includes the deeper instruction and the higher training of the flock of Christ, and this is proper and scriptural both in the church at home and abroad, and should be carefully provided for, that the flock may be fed, not only with milk, but with meat, and prepared for the highest Christian living and the most effective work for the Master. But it is not in the traditions of men that it is to be taught, but in the commandments of Christ; in the practical observance of His will and the duties and experiences of holy living, the one simple

rule of life being, "whatsoever, I have commanded you."

Such, then, is the Master's great commission; the one message which He gave on this great occasion, this most important meeting with His flock after His resurrection.

I AM WITH YOU.

III. This Abiding Presence, "Lo, I am with you all the days even unto the end of the age."

There is something very emphatic in the note of exclamation, Lo! It implies that they would be likely to forget it. It is intended to call perpetual attention to it. No matter how improbable it may appear, and how many other presences may seem to crowd it out, yet lo! I am with you. Look more closely and you will see Him.

There is, also, special emphasis in the present tense, "I am with you." Had He said, "I will be with you," it might have implied a presence different from that which they now enjoyed—that there was to be a break in His abiding with them, and then a subsequent appearing. But He says, "I am with you." I shall not cease for a moment to be with you. I shall be as truly with you the moment after my ascension as I am now while I am speaking these words to you.

I AM.

It would seem as if this word I AM had hidden in it an allusion to the Old Testament name which God used in speaking to Moses and sending him forth to lead Israel from bondage to freedom. "Thou shalt say to them, I AM hath sent me unto you." Our Lord means to have us understand that He is the same Almighty One who sent forth Moses to inaugurate the history of Israel—who is now sending them forth to inaugurate the history of Christianity. What a blessed fullness that name suggests! It is just an infinite blank, which each of us may fill up with all we need Him for. "I am," He says, and we may finish the sentence. Is it health? "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Is it spiritual life? "I am the Living Bread." Is it guidance? "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

And then He tells us He is with us all the days, not "always" merely, but "all the days," day by day, for each day's needs and duties as it comes, suiting His help and blessing to every changing day.

THE COMING KING.

There is one more thought which lingers in the Master's last words with the light of a

glorious hope. It is "the end of the age." It points us forward to the Second Coming of our blessed Lord. It is very beautiful to see the blending of His departing and His coming in these words. Like the Northern twilight, which almost meets the opening of the dawn, so His departing and the hope of His returning blend in these blessed words.

Oh, how blessed to believe that the dawn is near and that already the Day Star has arisen in our hearts, and the Presence that is with us now unseen is soon to burst upon us in the glory of His Appearing!